The Book of What's in Hell

Isle of Fire

volume five:

The Book of What's in Hell

Yacov Rabinovich

Invisible Books

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to

Brett Rutherford

author of *Poems from Providence*, *Whippoorwill Road*, and
The Gods As They Are On Their Planets,
an entirely great and nearly unknown poet

through his generosity with time, technology and expertise
the foremost benefactor of this press

through his love for Egypt, an inspiration to me
to undertake and persevere in the study of hieroglyphs

my friend for more than 25 years

this book is affectionately dedicated

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The Book of What's In Hell

Introduction

The Book of What's in Hell, or *Amduat* as it is called by Egyptologists, first appears early on in the New Kingdom (1554-1075), in the tomb of Thutmose I (1509-1497). From then until the time of Ramses II (1290-1223), that is, from the beginning of the 15th century B.C.E. to the end of the 13th, for 200 years, the *Amduat* is the text of choice to inscribe in royal tombs. Thereafter it will go in and out of fashion as newer compositions in the same genre appear. But the *Amduat* continues to be a popular choice for tombs, coffins and funerary papyri, to the end of the Ptolemaic period (332 to 30).[1]

The book is the first of the detailed guides to the world beyond. It originated the genre and held its place in it for the last 1500 years of Egyptian history. But despite its importance the *Amduat* hasn't been Englished since Budge translated it in 1905.[2] Budge was a canny considerer of Egyptian antiquity, and his editions of many hieroglyphic texts remain standard. However, he lived almost a century before the Egyptian verbal system was fully understood. Thus, despite his meticulous care, his translations are rarely helpful.

The only other complete translation is that made by Erik Hornung in 1963.[3] Hornung is the world's greatest authority on this text, and so it is with some diffidence that I offer my own rendering, even in a different language. Still, I believe my work may have its own small part to play in advancing our understanding.

I am of a later generation of Egyptologists, who have had the benefit of Polotsky's great work in Egyptian grammar in the 1960's. At present, thanks to the publication of James Hoch's *Middle Egyptian Grammar*,[4]

[1] Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, Cornell 1999, gives the best up to date survey of the funerary literature, the editions and the scholarship. In my references I cite the English translation for all books, where there is one.

[2] E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Heaven and Hell*, first published as volumes XX-XXII of *Books on Egypt and Chaldea*, Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London, 1905. The work became available as a one-volume paperback from Dover, Mineola NY, in 1996.

[3] Hornung was the first, in *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* 7, 1963, to publish the complete hieroglyphic text with variants. This publication includes a clear and accurate translation with exhaustive commentary. Between 1987 and 1994, he brought out a much easier-to-read version of the variorum text alone (*Ägyptiaca Helvetica* 13-15). Hornung's edition is the foundation upon which all future translations must rest.

A revised and slightly more literary version of his translation is available in paperback as *Die Unterweltsbücher der Ägypter*, Patnos, Düsseldorf, 2002. This replaces the earlier (1992) Artemis and Winkler hardcover edition. An English translation is forthcoming.

[4] SSEA Publication XV, Benben Publications, Mississauga, 1996.

Polotsky's findings can be easily understood and applied. Today a student with one year of college Egyptian behind him can understand the texts better than the titans of Egyptology did in the early 20th century.

Reading Egyptian in the pre-Polotskian way is like trying to understand a text where every instance of the words *when, since, although, if* and *who* have been removed. With the restoration of these words (to speak more technically, with an understanding of the adverbial nature of Egyptian verbs), a new clarity emerges.

Another difference in my work is the way I view the relation of the text to its pictures. The *Amduat* is preserved in copiously illustrated versions on the interior walls of tombs in the Valley of the Kings. The images are so beautiful, strange and apparently coherent, that they have so far imposed upon all researchers. I suggest here that the illustrations are not — despite their appearance — programmatic maps of the afterworld. Rather, they seem to have an entirely *tributary* relation to the text.

I believe that the text here is an epic poem describing the sun's night journey. In its rendering on tomb walls it has been interspersed with pictures, and again by written clarifications of those pictures. It is easily distinguished from these latter by its poetic language and symmetrical structure. The text is clear, concise and (by Egyptian standards) logical. It stands on its own, integral and complete. The images, on the other hand, appear to be a haphazard rendering of various striking phrases from the text. They give the impression of a detailed map of the underworld, following the progress of Ra from phase to phase of his journey. But actually *doing* that would not have given so vivid an appearance of having done so. Nor would the real map the poem suggests have filled the wall-space so completely as Egyptian aesthetics require.

The prose clarifications to the pictures, though interesting, are at two removes from the text and rarely of use in understanding it. This prose commentary is clearly recognizable as a third layer by its references to the illustrations as illustrations. Stylistically, it stands apart from the poem by its pedantic concern with names and measurements. Still, we are glad to have it, since it provides some very revealing bits of information.

Recognizing three successive and distinct layers of composition — that is, poem, then pictures, then commentary — I reverse the procedure of my predecessors. First, I give the poem itself, and only then turn to the illustrations with their independent commentary.

Finally, I note that, as is my custom, I have rendered into the text itself all the clarifications that usually go into footnotes. No intelligible translation is perfectly literal, and when the text itself is 3,000 years old considerable interpretation must go into even the most seemingly literal translation. Even more must be done if one aspires to better than broken

English. But if at times I expand the text, I do so only to make clear what is actually there.

The title of the book is (as the first line of the poem states) The Invisible World (*At Yemenet*, literally, *The Secret Space*.) The title *What's in Hell* (*Jemy Dewat*, or as it is traditionally transliterated *Amduat*) is a general term for books of this genre which was early on, incorrectly, applied to this particular text. I have retained the well-entrenched term because it is both striking and accurate.

The poem itself is written in august and rhetorical verse. It is imposing and monumental as the grandest passages in the *Mahabharata*. Fittingly. It is the resolution of the central religious tension of Egyptian civilization.

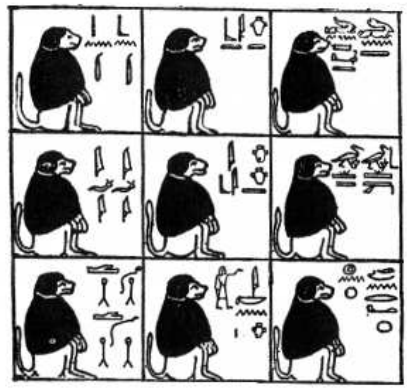
There had always been an opposition between the dignified, aristocratic solar cults and popular belief in the suffering god Osiris. The solarizing trend reached its peak in the reign of Akhenaten (1366-1349 B.C.E.), when the heretic Pharaoh advanced his absolute (and to the Egyptians intolerable) solar monotheism The *Amduat* exemplified the Osirian counter-trend, and would prove a very adequate response to Akhenaten's challenge. Its formulations answered the reforming pharaoh by incorporating the sun into a theology of night. So compelling and well realized was this vision of the Beyond that it realigned Egyptian religion around the figure of Osiris. He became the eclipsed sun that plonged all Egypti into metaphysical darkness.

This utter triumph of otherworldliness reduced the sun itself to a *ba*, a pale ghost making perfunctory circuit of the skies, a symbolic disk of light that only became fully real on its descent below the horizon to the world of dreams. Akhenaten's daylit "reality" was defeated, but at the price of a material world drained of color and meaning, traded in for a Further World of delicious tortures and uncanny satisfactions.

Before closing I must fully acknowlege my immeasurable debt to the work of Erik — a debt which seems to annoy him considerably. He is the great pioneer in the study of the afterworld literature, and I could have accomplished nothing here had his work not preceded mine. My own efforts are in dialogue with his magisterial productions, and if I diverge from him in some matter of interpretation, that is no criticism, but rather a testament to his power to inspire.

In addition, I have a debt to the Theban Mapping Project. They have made available online, without charge, a wealth of full color images from the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. These clear and detailed photos made possible many an understanding. I encourage all of my readers to consult their site in conjunction with this book. Go to *www.thebanmappingproject.com* and do an image search with the caption-keyword *Imydwat*.

Hour One:



Going Below the Horizon

Poem of the First Hour

The god Ra reaches this, the first gate of the underworld,
here he halts, here he rests,
then he turns and gives these orders to the spirits who guard it:

"Open to me your doors, fling wide your gates,
kindle your fires to light my way,
O you whom I have created, lead me through,
O you whom I formed out of my own substance!
for I ordained your existence, underworld spirits,
placed my corpse in your care;
for I made you to be guides for my ghost
when I descend here every night;
for I created you to actualize the power of my spirit.

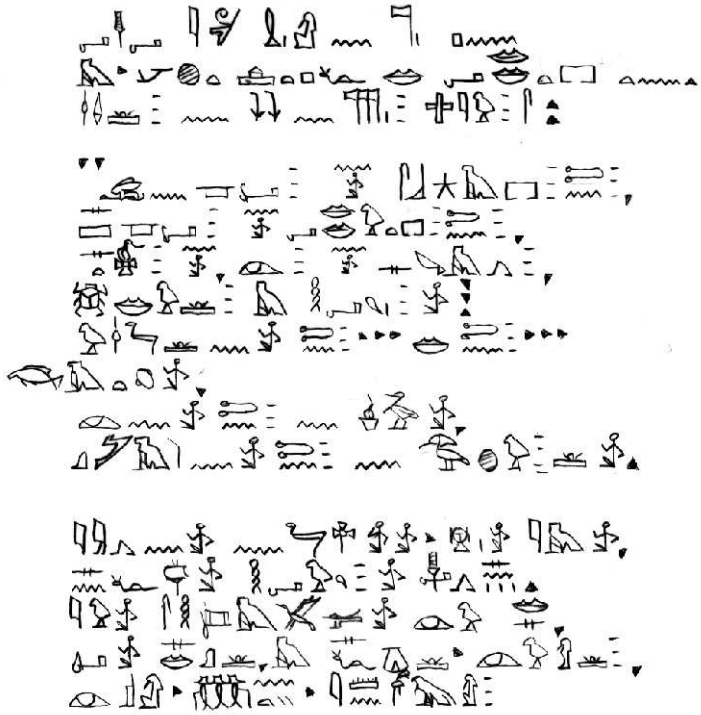
"I have come here to achieve the mystery of my being, to give myself to myself,
to restore the breath of life to my own dead body so it rises and lives and moves.
I, even I, will annihilate all who oppose this,
in the mystery of my being I shall revive Osiris Foremost of the Dead:
I shall resuscitate him into uncanny life.

A2h2a jn h2m n nt2r pn
m-h3t h2tp.f r a2rrt tn.
Wd2-mdw n nn n nt2rw jmyw.s:

"Wn n.j sbaw.t2n,
ss2 n.j arrwt.t2n,
stj n.j, jrj.w n.j ss2m,
h3prw m h2a2w.j!
Wd2.n.j t2n—r-t2n—h4at.j;
jrj.n.j t2n m ba.j,
qma.n.j t2n n ah3w.j.

"Jj.n.j nd2.j-h3r.j jm.j,
snf.j h2a2w.j, a2h2a2.sn.
Jw.j sh2tm.j jryw r.s,
dj.j srq, m sfg-jrw,[1]
Wsjr-H3nty-Jmntyw.

Hour One



[1] Taking *Sfg* as "mysterious; abnormal" (*cf.* Sethe on Pyramid Text 655a). The Epithet refers to Ra, not Osiris, and is paralleled a few lines later in the reply of the gods with *s2ta jrw*.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

"Lift your arms, hold them wide in adoration, baboons,
you whose dawn-cries greet each day's rising sun,
open these gates for me, baboons,
my coming here is another kind of sunrise.

"You goddesses, you gods, who arise from my now ghostly being
as dreams arise from the dreamer,
you originate in me, you exist to help me become
my borning form, Kepri, Lord of the Otherworld.
You will rise and take your place on this mysterious shore,
here on the edge of the great water, Wer-en-es.
Your duty is here at this gate, doing your part to help me,
now when I come to the aid of all the otherworldlings.
As for you, you have your fertile fields,
your own acres right here; you will never want."

The gods of this gate to Ra, their prayer to the great god:

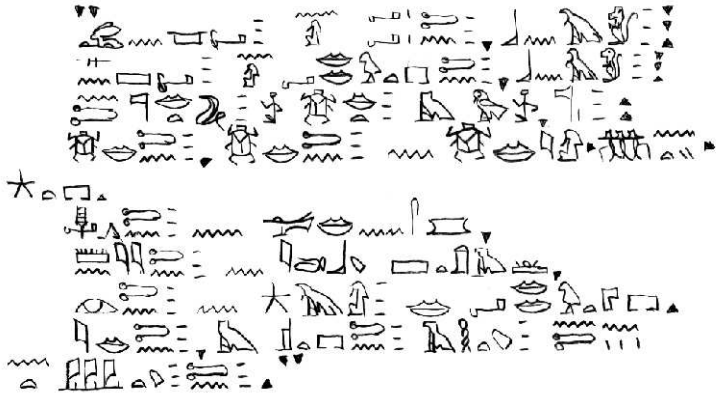
"The Hidden Place, with all its mysterious beings, will unfold itself for you,
the gates of the Great Necropolis will obey your voice
and open to you, O mysterious being,
that which is in darkness will brighten for you,
for you will return life to the place of annihilation
when you who are Ra reach the abode
of Osiris, Lord of the Cemetery.

"Wn n.j a2wy.t2n, bntyw!
Sns2 n.j a2rrt.t2n, bntyw!
Nt2rwt.j h3prwt m ba.j, nt2rw:
h3pr.t2n, h3pr.t2n n H3prj-h3nty-Dwat.
A2ha2.t2n n Wr-n-s,
mny.t2n n jdb s2ta,
jrj.t2n n dwatyw r a2rrt.
Jr.t2n, m st.t2n ah2wt n.t2n nt sh3wt.t2n."

Nt2rw a2rrt tn n Ra2, snsj.sn nt2r a2a:

"Wn n.k Jmnt, s2ta jrw,
sns2 n.k wnwy Njwt Wrt,
sh2d2 n.k kkyt,
srq.k h2tmyt
ja2r.k m rn.k n Ra
r bw h4ry Wsjr-H3nty-Jmntyw.

Hour One



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

"Shouts of joy rise for you as you approach the gates to the underworld,
prayers resound in the sky above as well,
for you also give life to the souls that live among the stars;
glory to you when you enter the portal
of the limitless place of the dead,
when we, like sunrise-greeting baboons, open the door of Hell,
when we, like the apes who howl at first light, rejoice for this your inverted dawning,
when adoring goddesses praise you,
when the gleaming cobra-goddesses drive back the dark by spitting flamey venom,
when the gods worship you, Ra,
when the twelve hours lead you, the hours which you, sun god, comprise,
when your daughters, the two Maats, tow forward your barque,
when you have gone down to your rest here
after you've established your statutes on the earth, wherever men till the land,
when you take away darkness and bring day for us in turn.

"Jw hy n Ra2 r r wnwy ta,
jaw n.k, srq ah3w,
a2q.k r sba n Wrt,
wn.n n.k wnwy m bntyw,
wn.n n.k m ht2tw,
snsj t2w snsywt.k,
sh2d2 n.k ah3wt.k kkw,
dwa t2w nt2rw.k, Ra2,
ss2m t2w wnwt jmywt.k,
st2a t2w saty.ky m wja.k,
h2tp.k, wd2w tpyw sh3wt ta,
jt2jt.k: grh; jnjt.k: hrw.

Hour One

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

"It is you, O great god, who fare across the hours,
you who sit in Kepri's barque, who ride in the boat of Becoming,
(Kepri who makes all things grow and change!)
In his name you receive the first fruits of the fields . . . (obsc.).
Neith is gracious to you,
Neith who made the world emerge from primordial waters,
she helps you cross the sea of the underworld:
for this is the place to which the ur-ocean ebbed,
that fluent vast which covered all things in the pre-creation chaos,
Neith favors your passage, as now you cut the flood,
your prow casting back the waves on either side;
Closer-of-the-Earth shuts the entrance to Hell behind you
and raises his arms in adoration.
The goddesses of Wer-en-es, Hell's great under-ocean,
will praise you, they will rejoice in you
for you triumph over your enemies,
for you wreck all who oppose you."

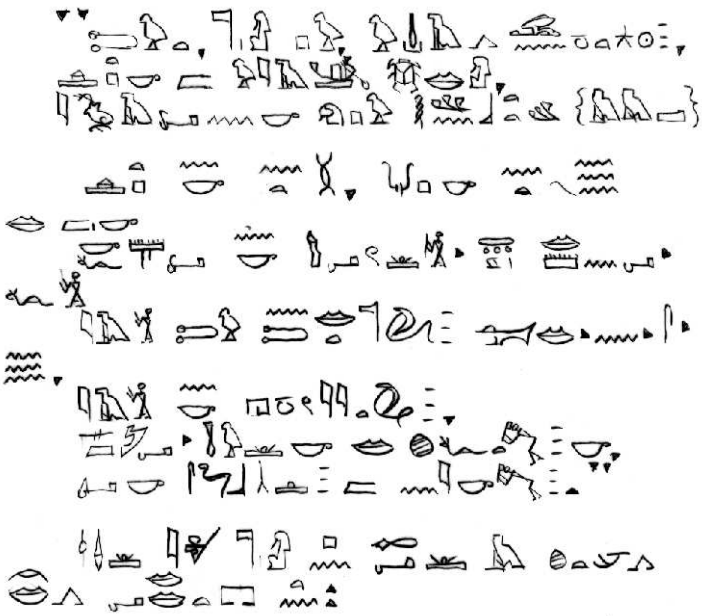
Utterance by his majesty, the great god Ra, after he has reached the portal leading from the first region:

"Twt nt2r pw wd2a wnwt,
htp.k m wja H3prj,
jt2a.n.k tpyw h2bntt {mms2}.
H2tp n.k Njt, wpj.k nt r gs.k;[1]
kfj n.k D2ba2-Ta rmn.f.
Jaj tw nt2rwt Wr-n-s,
jaj n.k h2nwyt,
smaa2-h3rw.k r h3ftyw.k,
dj.k sd2b m njkw."

Wd2-mdw jn h2m n nt2r pn a2a m-h3t spr a2rrt tn:

[1] Taking the owl as a mistaken reading of *m* for *gs*.

Hour One



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

"As yours were the gates fortified against all enemies,
as yours were the doors that were strong,
as yours were the door bolts that sealed the passage behind so no enemy could follow me underground—
O you who accompany the beginning of my journey,
my fellows for this first part of my passage—
so you faithfully remain here in your places,
you who stand with me now upon this shore."

Then this god passes, goes on to Wer-en-es,
but these ones weep because he's left them behind.

"A2h2a.n a2rrwt.tn,
rwd2.n wnw.t2n,
h3tm.n qarwt.t2n,
jyw h3r.j n a2pw—
h3r.j n s2asw.j:
mn{.n}.t2n m swt.t2n,
a2h2a2w r jdb.t2n."

A2pp nt2r pn h2r.sn, hwt.sn,
m-h3t snn.f sn (n) Wr-n-s.

Hour One

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Introduction to the First Hour:

A guide to the Invisible World, home of souls and ghosts,
home of gods and shadows, with their rules and regulations;
it begins with the highest peak of the underworld, the western desert,
the place of graves, entrance to the twilight zone,
and it ends in the thickest most absolute darkness of otherworld night,
for there you will find the only way out,
gleaming far ahead like a distant star on the horizon.

In this book you will find knowledge of the ghosts who inhabit Hell,
the knowledge of what they require,
here you will find knowledge of their hymns in praise of Ra,
knowledge that belongs to ghosts—great, mysterious secrets!
knowledge of each hour of the night, knowledge of its gods,
knowledge of what commands Ra shouts to them,
knowledge of the paths and portals that great god passes,
knowledge of the course of the hours and the deities governing each,
knowledge of the blessed, and of the damned
who are entirely erased from existence.

When Ra sails down the western sky into the underworld, Seth rises at the prow of the ship, ready to defend him. Seth faces whatever menace may rise on the western horizon.

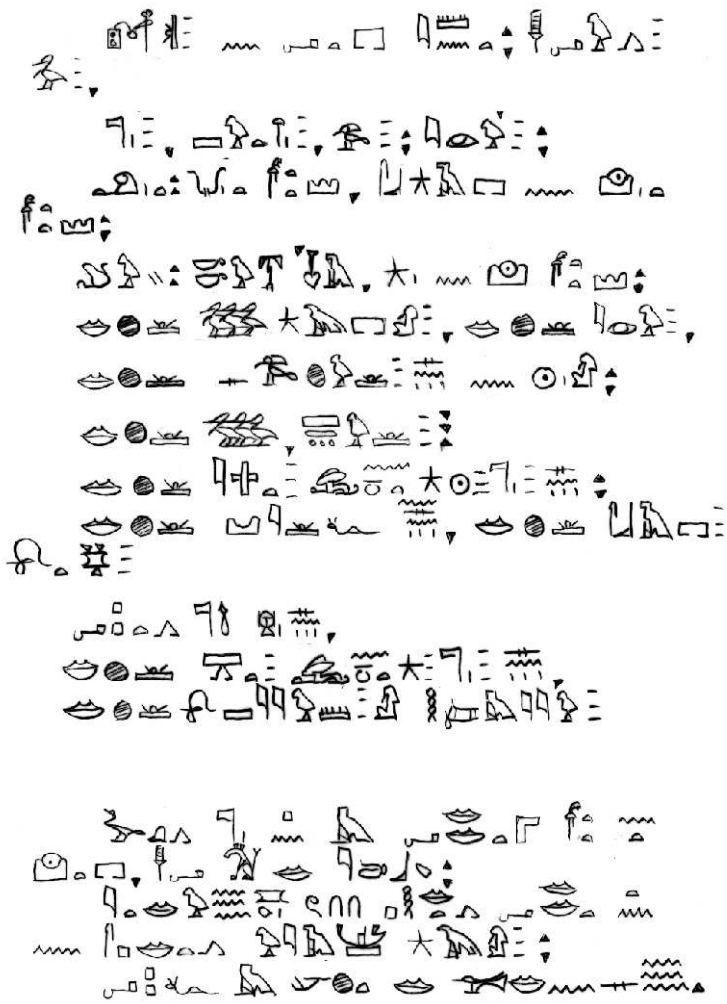
Ra's boat will travel 800 miles down this vestibule of Hell before he reaches the Otherworld itself.

The first place he'll reach there is Wer-en-es.

Ss2 n a2t jmnt; a2h2a2w baw,
nt2rw, s2wt, ah3w; jrw;
h2at: wpt jmntt, sba n ah3t jmntt;
ph2wy: kkw sma(w), sba n ah3t jmntt;
rh3 baw datyw, rh3 jrw,
rh3 sah3.sn n Ra2;
rh3 baw, s2taw!
rh3 jmyt wnwt nt2rw.sn;
rh3 dwj(w).f n.sn, rh2 sbaw wawt
a2ppt nt2r a2a h2r.sn,
rh3 s2mt wnwt nt2r.sn,
rh3 was2yw h2tmyw.

A2q nt2r pn m a2rrt jmntt n ah3t, a2h2a2 Sth3 r jdb;
jtrw s2t-md2wy ph2rt a2rrt tn n sprt wja datyw;
a2pp.f m h3t r Wr-n-s.

Hour One



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Pictures and Commentary

Complete Image of the First Hour

I will offer my interpretations of the images for each hour in smaller print sections. The portions of this book given in normal print will always be a direct translation from the hieroglyphic text.

I will begin each section of the annotations by giving, in italics, the lines from the poem that the images correspond to—that is, where such lines exist.

The pictures that accompany this book, with their detailed annotations, are not really illustrations of the *Amduat* poem. Rather, they form a parallel book, inspired by it. I will begin with the middle registers, then consider the upper and lower ones. The pictures reproduced here will not always perfectly correspond to the description and translation. I have reproduced the copyright-free illustrations from Budge's book, but the complete and synthetic text from Hornung's edition. The discrepancies are noted.

Most of the figures have names or epithets written beside them, and there are superscriptions to the main sections of the picture, but these are far from adequate to reveal their meanings. Accordingly, I will provide an extended discussion of them. In this discussion I will often have to give more than one interpretation of the images. This is not due to any want of virile decision on my part. Rather, it points to an important feature of Egyptian thought. Egypt will always prefer to represent the spiritual world with several, often contradictory, images. There was never any interest in reconciling them. The alternate readings are to be taken as partial representations of truths too profound to be pinned down with tidy logic. The spirit world is the realm of paradox, of "both/and," like the world of Alice through the Looking Glass.

Middle Registers

The world of the dead is in every way opposite to ours: night is day, death is life, the past is present, and so on. This universal insight into the nature of the Otherworld is immediately acknowledged here by representing all the figures *backwards*. The Sun's boat "should" be facing left, and be *followed* by the other figures of the middle register. This inversion of sequence also underlines the fact that that here we are "counting down" towards the moment when age is reversed and rebirth begins.

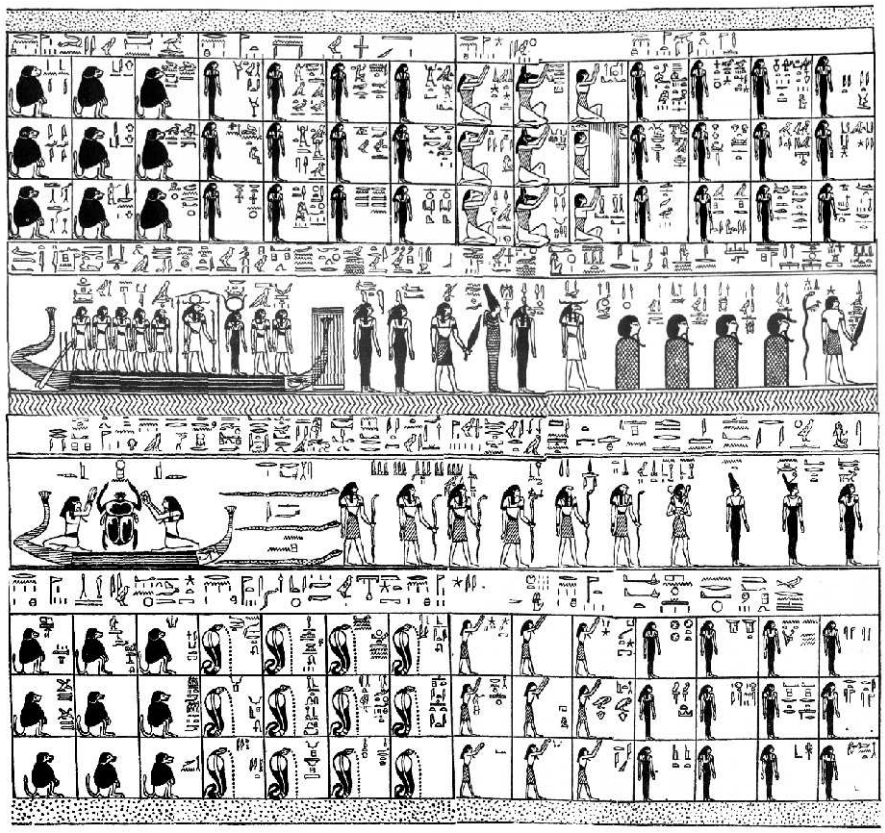
The middle register is divided into two lines of figures on water, the oblongs filled with wavy lines. (Budge's version, which I reproduce, has water only for the first of these). These should actually be shown as one continuous procession: the doubling is due to constraints of space. The water is more indicative of rapid travel in general than of any river in particular. Since the Nile was Egypt's only true highway, this significance of water is easily grasped. The figures are not then walking on water or along the shore: they are moving fast.

A further distortion, and one that is not merely practical, is found in the apparent sequence of the images. Here and throughout the book, we are often shown what is not really a series of stages, or of separate characters, but different views of a single phenomenon. The aesthetic of Cubism gives a good parallel. Various points of view have been parceled out through the visual space, without regard to how things would "really" look.

Many of the figures throughout the book are simply concepts which appear personified only here: their names are always given in quotation marks. I have indicated where the meaning of a name remains too obscure to merit translation (obsc.) and

Hour One

Complete Image of the First Hour



where no name is given for a figure (anon.) The cryptic epithets are given, in the hieroglyphics and transliteration, between pointed brackets {}.

It must always be borne in mind that the sequence and even the presence of many of the figures and images here is not logical. The meaning is associative and cumulative. This is not so much a book as it is a poem or a dream.

The Boat of the Sun Preceded by Maat

. . .when your daughters, the two Maats, tow forward your barque . . .

Maat, Maat, Wep-Wawet, Sia, Hathor, Flesh, Horus-who-makes-eulogy, Thoth the Lord of Truth, Wide-Awake, Hu, Steersman.

Preceding (to the right of) the boat of the sun is Maat, "Truth," depicted twice, with the ostrich feather that represents her name on her head. The doubling indicates that Truth is always at Ra's side, in the underworld as in the day-sky.

Maat is a very rich concept-word, and embraces a host of meanings including Justice, Equity, and Balance (both in the societal and ecological senses).

The boat itself is essentially the day-barque, with an ornamental mat hung from the prow. This will soon vanish as the boat transforms into the ship of Night. The crew is (reading from right to left):

Wep-Wawet ("Opener of the Ways"), a god of whom little is known beyond his role in facilitating all passages, particularly birth and death.

Sia ("Perception"), a son of Ra, indicates Ra's careful scrutiny of the path ahead.

Hathor, who bears the title "Mistress of the Ship" The Egyptian Venus, Hathor is also the goddess who rules the entire birth-death-afterlife cycle.

Ra stands in a shrine. He has a ram's head, which is to be read hieroglyphically: the symbol for ram (*ba*) is also used to write the word for ghost (*ba*). Ra is labeled *Yewef*, "flesh." This, like his "ghostly" depiction with ram's head, indicates he is in weakened, aging form. He is subject—like all flesh—to time, and destined to "die."

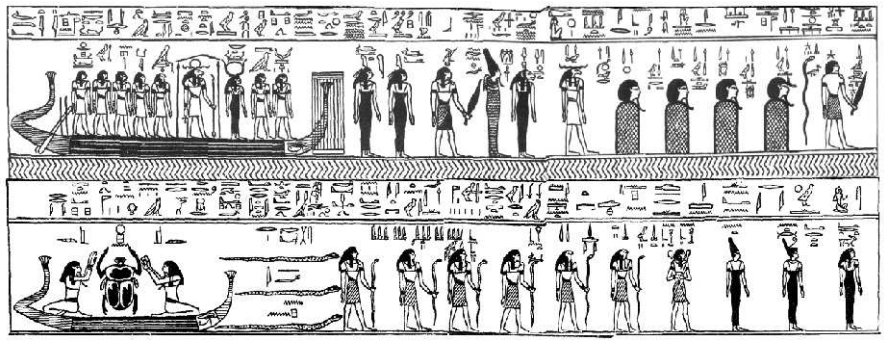
Horus stands behind the shrine of Ra. His name *Her-Hekenew* could mean either "Horus who utters praise" or "Horus of the fragrant oil," but whether we read this as a reference to eulogy or to embalming, the funereal sense is equally clear.

The next three figures, "Lord of Truth,"(also an epithet of Thoth), "Wide-Awake" (which could also be read as "Hippo," an epithet for Seth), and "Speech" (also to be read as "Hu" the god who personifies Ra's power to command) suggest the defense every dead soul must make before the tribunal of Osiris. Also, we could simply take the figures to be Thoth, Seth and Hu, standard members of the sun-boat's crew. The final figure, at the helm, is simply named "Steersman."

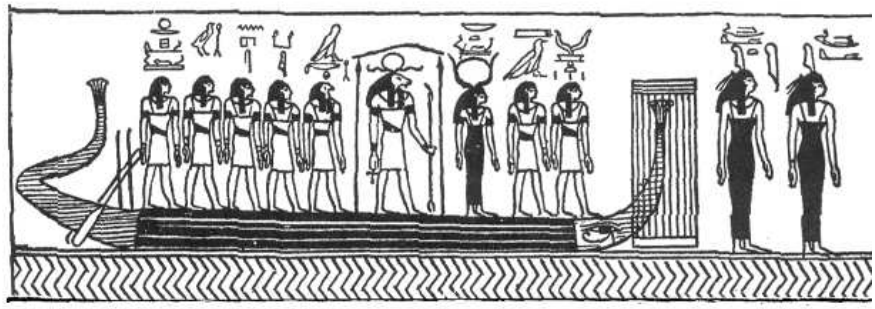
Here Ra shows the first signs of being subject to time and death.

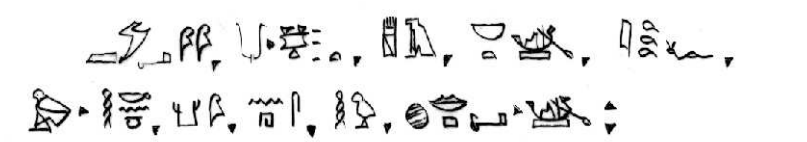
Hour One

Middle Registers: Complete



The Boat of the Sun Preceded by Maat





Maa2t-Maa2t, Wpj-Wawt, Sja, Nbt-Wja, Jwf, H2r-H2knw, Ka-Maa2t, Nhs, H2w, H3rp-Wja;

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Ra's Guardians

Wounder, Lord of the West, Sekmet, The Great Illuminator.

Immediately following the ship are four deities. (As always, we read the figures from left to right, the opposite of the way they are facing. We read the boat of Ra from right to left because the boat as a whole had been reversed.)

A figure with a large knife, "Wounder," a guardian of Ra.

Osiris, labeled "Lord of the West," appearing here to show that Ra now enters Osiris' sunset realm.

Lion-headed Sekmet (lit. "the Powerful Female"), Ra's consort, who personifies the sun's destructive power.

Ra himself, ram-headed. Instead of a sun-disk, he has over his head the words "the Great Illuminator."

These figures stress the danger of the passage, the need to guard against underworld enemies. They may also represent Ra's role as judge and punisher, a theme already alluded to by the two Maats.

Four Steles and Traveler

. . . when you have gone down to your rest here,
for you have established your statutes on the earth, wherever men till the land . . .

Decree of Ra, Decree of Atum, Decree of Kepri, Decree of Osiris, Traveler through the Hours.

Four steles with human heads, labeled "Decree of Ra," "Decree of Atum," "Decree of Kepri" and "Decree of Osiris." The steles themselves are to be read hieroglyphically: the image of an upright tablet on which a decree would be inscribed represents the word for "decree." Accordingly these figures personify the legislative and executive authority of Ra in all his aspects: as Kepri, the dawn; Ra, the midday sun; Atum, the setting sun; Osiris, the sun at night.

The decrees are followed by a serpent and figure with a knife labeled "Traveler through the Hours." Variations in other versions suggest that the two figures were a mistaken duplication of a single image (dittography). The original would have been a man holding a serpent-staff indicative of authority in the underworld.

On the other hand, the knife may be a meaningful emblem of Ra's role as circuit-judge of the Otherworld. In that case, the entire series, from the Maats to Traveler, should be taken as a unit.

Ra's royal and judicial power go with him in all his aspects, in every hour.

Hour One

Ra's Guardians

Nknw, H3nty-Jmntt, Sh3mt, Sh2dw Wr;

Four Steles and Traveler

Wd2-Mdw Ra2, Wd2-Mdw Jtm, Wd2-Mdw H3prj, Wd2-Mdw Wsjr; D2aj-Wnwt;

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Second Level of the Middle Register

Kepri Boat

. . . you originate in me, you exist to help me become
my borning form, Kepri, Lord of the Otherworld.

* * *

You are the god who fares across the hours,
who sits in Kepri's barque, who rides in the boat of Becoming,
you make all things grow and change . . .

Osiris, Kepri, Osiris, Purifier-of-the-Mouth, Cutter, Whetstone.

A barque in which two figures of Osiris (the dead sun) raise their arms in adoration of the divine scarab Kepri, the sun in his reborn or dawn aspect. The scarab beetle (*keper*) has this meaning because it is read hieroglyphically. The image of a scarab is ordinarily used to write the word for "become" (*keper*). This pun, along with the insect's habit of rolling a ball of dung to lay its eggs in, made it seem the ideal symbol for the morning sun, which rolls its brilliant orb forward into existence.

The barque is followed by three snakes. Snakes, which live in holes in the ground, were the typical Egyptian image for underworld spirits, whether positive or negative. These three, whose names are "Purifier-of-the-Mouth," "Cutter" and "Whetstone" allude to the "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony, a well attested but vaguely understood part of the funeral ritual. It involved holding an adze to the mouth of the mummy to symbolically open it, enabling the dead person to eat, breath and speak in the afterworld.

The overall sense is that this is the hour of Ra's funeral, and the beginning of his rebirth.

Harvest Spirits

As for you, you have your fertile fields and acres right here; you will never want.

* * *

. . . for you are Lord of the Harvest,
you receive the first fruits of the fields . . .

Fields, Greens, Bread, Victorious, Holder of the Staff, In the Right Place, Landowner.

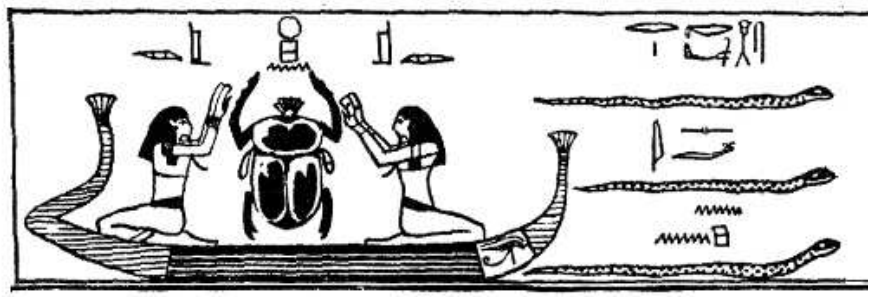
Three human figures with serpent staves, holding *ank* crosses in their right hands. They are named "Fields," "Greens" and "Bread."

Another three figures follow, similarly equipped but falcon-headed: these are "Victorious," "Holder of the Staff," and "In the Right Place." The final figure in this group is a man holding two crooks of rulership, whose name is "Landowner."

The image makes a vague suggestion of the underworld's role in agriculture and the sun god's authority there. This theme is developed fully in the second hour. Here and in the poem the agricultural reference follows logically the identification of Ra with Kepri, who personifies *growth*.

Hour One

Kepri Boat



Wsjr-H3prj-Wsjr; Sḳ-R, Sf, Spd;

Harvest Spirits

Sh3ty, Smwy, Bnbnty; H2bnw, Mdwy, D2awty, H2bnty;

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Neith and her Entourage

(Budge's version only gives the first three of these figures)

Neith is gracious to you,
Neith who made the world emerge from primordial waters,
she helps you cross the waters of the underworld:
this is the place to which the ur-ocean ebbed,
that fluent vast which covered all things in the pre-creation chaos,
Neith favors your passage, as now you cut the flood,
your prow casting back the waves on either side;
Closer-of-the-Earth shuts the entrance to Hell behind you
and raises his arms in adoration.

Neith, (obsc.), Nephthys, Opener-of-the-Waterways, (obsc.), Closer-of-the-Earth.

Neith with the white crown of Upper Egypt. She ordinarily wears the red Lower Egyptian crown, and this is probably another instance of the general reversal which obtains in the dead-realm. As goddess of the primordial waters, Neith is an appropriate figure to conduct Ra into the next hour and the great ocean of Wer-en-es.

A figure in the red crown , *(name obsc.)*

Nephthys. Significance here uncertain.

"Opener of the Water-Ways," a staff topped by a mummy between a pair of cattle-horns, crossed by two serpents. The horns are the glyph for the word "to open." The image alludes to the second hour, when the barque will pass through the watery realm of Wer-en-es. The mummy atop the staff would indicate authority in the underworld. The two serpents facing in different directions probably suggest the power to come and go at will.

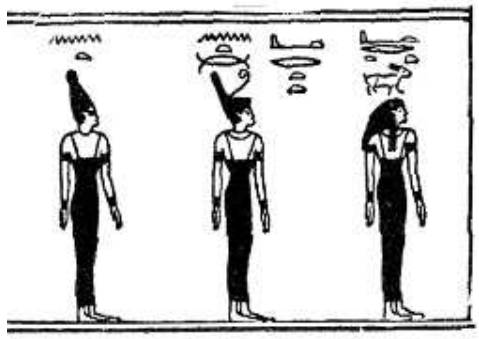
A royal staff, *(name obsc.)*

A figure looking backwards (though to us he seems the only figure facing forwards) named "Closer of the Earth," whose task would be to close the gates of the West after Ra has descended through them.

Though some of the details remain elusive, this group seems a clear pendant to the initial sun barque: a divine entourage whose task is to close the earth after Ra has entered, and to lead him into the next hour.

Hour One

Neith and her Entourage



Njt, {A2rt,} Nbt-H2wt, Wpj-Nt, {Mst,}D2ba-Ta.

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Text in the Middle Registers

Maat, Ra's eternal companion, whether he crosses the skies or sounds the depths of Hell, is here about to pull forward the Night Barque, the boat that brings him through the gate of this hour. This hour is like an enormous field, or like an entire city. It's 800 miles to cross this region. The next place Ra will reach is Wer-en-es, and that's 2,000 miles long. There he'll grant expanses of fertile land to spirits loyal to him.

As for this hour where we are now, it's called "Waters of Ra," and it is watched over by a spirit *(name obsc.)*.

As soon as Ra, in the form of a ghostly ram, enters through the gate to this field, he begins to issue commands and tend to the inhabitants of Hell.

He will continue to transform after he has passed the further gate of this hour. Beyond it, none of these dead can follow him. Instead they halt at its doors.

Ra issues orders to the gods of the gate, who let him pass. This is carried out in the secret depths of Hell: mysteriously, spiritually, for the knowing few, this book's initiates.

Ma2aty m st2a nt2r pn m Msktt sqdjt m a2rrt nt njwt tn.

Jtrw s2t md2wy pw. App.f m h3t r Wr-n-s. Jtrw h3mt s2t pw m aw.s. Ms h2nb r.s n nt2rw jmyw h3t.f.

"Nt-Ra" rn n sh3t tn. {"Jrj Nbjwy"} rn n jry.s.

S2aa2 nt2r pn wd2-mdw, jrjt sh3rw jmyw Dat r sh3t tn a2rrt tn a2ppt nt2r pn h2r.sn m sr.

Jrj(r).f h3prw m-h3t a2pp.f a2rrt tn jwtt ja2r mtyw h3t.f. A2ha2.sn n a2rrt tn.

Jw.f wd2-mdw.f n nn n nt2rw jmyw a2rrt tn. Jw jrj.tw nn m jmnt nt dwat, mj-qd pn dsr jmn, n a2nd-rh3yw-st.

Hour One

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Upper and Lower Registers

Lift your arms, hold them wide in adoration, baboons,
you whose dawn-cries greet each day's rising sun,

* * *

when the twelve hours lead you, the hours which you, sun god, comprise,

These images are a panorama of the hour's inhabitants. Some appear in groups of nine, a number which in Egyptian tends to symbolize "many," or by twelves, which may suggest their presence through all twelve hours of the night.

Many of the names are either missing or unintelligible. The ones we *can* read are worth listing in full, since they are quite poetic and convey, telegraphically, a vivid picture of the region. We will read each series of nine or twelve boxes from top to bottom, starting from the upper left corner.

At first glance, the upper and lower registers seem much the same, but a careful comparison of the names will show that those in the lower are decidedly more infernal in character. This is particularly apparent from the cobra goddesses in the lower register who parallel the human-looking ones directly above them. This duality will become more pronounced in the following hour.

Upper Register (beginning from the left)

. . . open these gates for me, baboons, my coming here is another kind of sunrise.
You goddesses, you gods . . .

* * *

. . . when we, like sunrise-greeting baboons, open the door of Hell,
When we, like the apes who howl at first light, rejoice for this your inverted dawning . . .

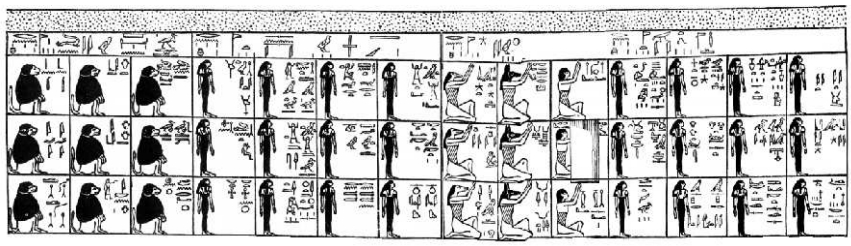
Earth Openers

Names of gods who open the earth to the great ghost Ra:
Ape, Baboon, (obsc.),
Earth's Darling, Earth's Dearest Darling, Praiser,
Opens-the-Earth, Discloses-Underearth, Looks-on-Ra.

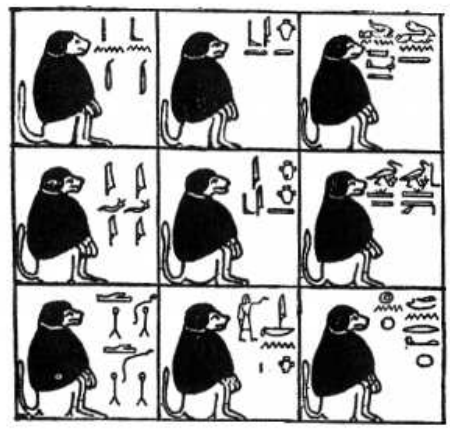
Rnw nw nt2rw wnyw n ba a2a:
Bntj, Jwf, {Dh2dh2},
Jb-Ta, Jbjb-Ta, H2knw,
Wn-Ta, Wba-ta, Ma-n-Ra2.

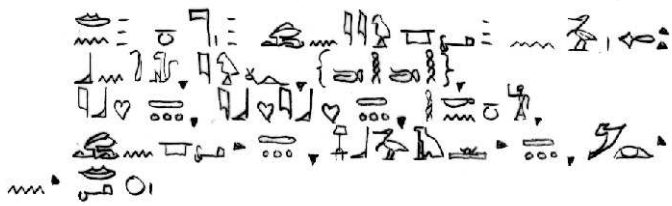
Hour One

Upper Register



Earth Openers





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Praising Goddesses

Names of goddesses who praise the underground Ra:
Throat, Maiden, Living Forever,
Praising Ghost, Lofty Soul, Conqueror-of-her-Enemies,
Great Hidden One, Revered, (obsc.),
She who Salutes, Grand Protectress, (obsc.).

Rnw nw nt2rwt snsywt Jmy Ta:
H2tyt, H2wnt, Nbt A2nh3,
H2knt-m-Ba.s, Qajt-m-Ah3.s, Sh3mt-m-H3ftyw.s
Jmnt Wrt, S2fyt, {R *Nt2t2*}
Qajt-a2, Nbt Mkt, {*Sh4jt*}.

Adoring Gods

Names of Gods who adore Ra:

The first three spirits have crocodile heads and their names refer variously to the speed, vocal habits, and physical appearance of the Egyptian crocodile:

Hell Traveler, Screamer, Imposing Face:

Three jackal headed gods follow,. The only intelligible name alludes to the fact that jackals prowl the western desert, which is also the burial ground.

Lord of the Burial Ground, (obsc., obsc.).

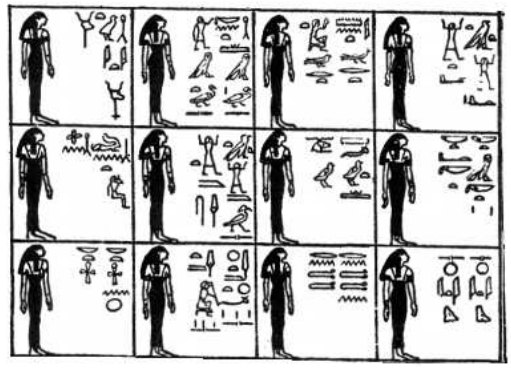
Three human-headed spirits, who, like all the others in this group of nine, have their arms lifted in adoration:

(obsc., obsc.), Hands-Raised-in-Praise.

Rnw nw nt2rw dwayw Ra2:
D2aj Dwat, Ngy, Sh3m H2r,
Nb Ta D2sr, {*Wpj Tawy, Wpj Sh3mty,*}
{*H2d2 A2, Maa A2*}, *H2sj A2.*

Hour One

Praising Goddesses



Adoring Gods

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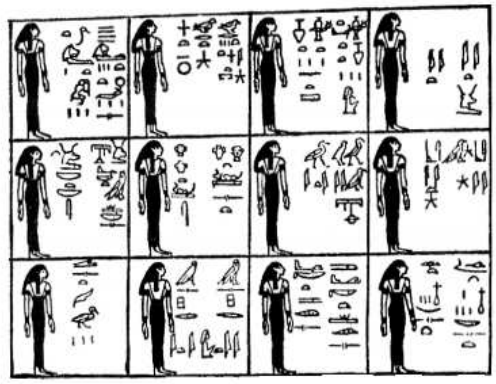
Goddesses Who Lead Ra

Names of Goddesses who lead the way for the great god:
Pounder-of-her-Enemies'-Faces, Experienced-Protectress-of-her-Lord, Ghost-Killer,
Great-Dweller-in-Hell, In-her-Boat, Safe Port,
Repeller-of-Seth's-Crew, Midnight, Guardian,
Killer, Starry, She-who-beholds-the Beauty-of-her-Lord.

Rnw nw nt2rwt ss2mywt nt2r a2a:
Ws2mt-h2awt-h3ftyw.s, Ss2at-mkjt-nb.s, Dnt-baw,
Wrt-jmyt-Dat, H2ryt-Jb-Wja.s, Mspryt,
H3sft-Smayt-Sth4, Ws2awt, Mkjt Nb.s,
Dndyt, Sbayt, Maat-Nfrw-Nb.s

Hour One

Goddesses Who Lead Ra



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Lower Register:

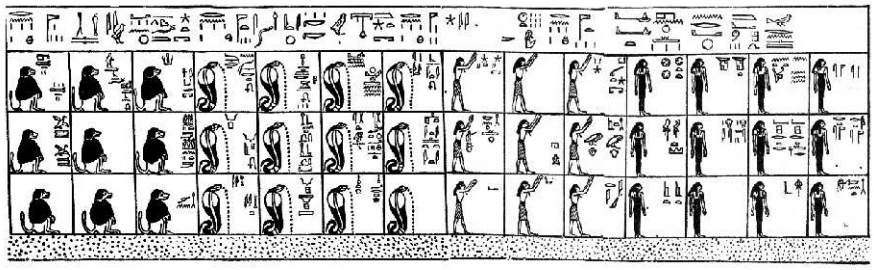
Praising Baboons

Names of gods who praise Ra when he enters Hell:
Ape, Rejoicing-Baboon, Howler,
Praise-Howler, Dancer (anon.),
In-the-Shrine, At-the-Border, (obsc.).

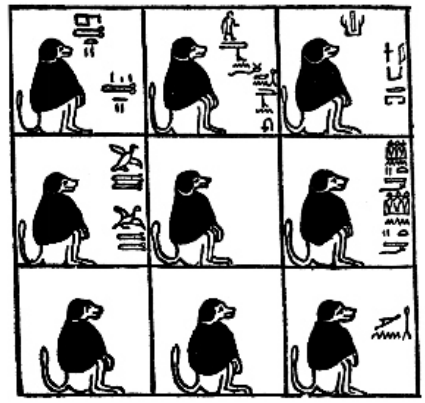
Rnw nw nt2rw h2syw n Ra2 a2q.f m Dwat:
Ht2t, Pat2t2, Bsj,
H2kn-m-Bsy.f, Jba, (anon.)
Jmy-Kar, H3nty-Ta, {H2nn}.

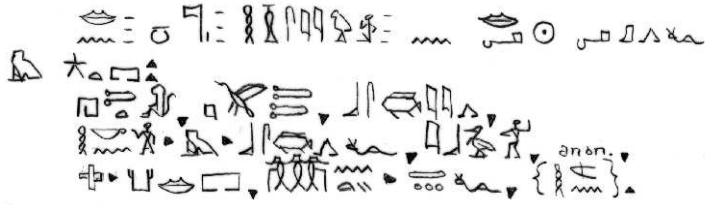
Hour One

Lower Register



Praising Baboons





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Cobra Goddesses

Kindle your fires to light my way . . .

* * *

. . . when adoring goddesses praise you,
when the gleaming cobra-goddesses drive back the dark by spitting flamey venom . . .

I have already discussed the use of serpents as underworld spirits. The association of snakes with light and heat is also natural and universal. The sting of venom is perceived as "hot," while snakes themselves are shiny like fire.Thus the goddesses who light the way for Ra underground are represented by cobras spitting venom.

Names of goddesses who illumine the darkness of Hell:
Flaming, Burning, Cobra,
Pain-Fire, Slicer, Lit,
The-Lands'-Protectress, Enemy-Hacker, Beautiful-to-See,
Flame-Thrower, Gracious, (anon.).

Rnw nw nt2rwt sh2d2ywt kkw m Dwat:
Nsrt, Wpst, Wad2t,
Mrt-Nsrt, Bh2nt, Wps2t,
H3wjt-Taw, H2sqt-H3ftyw, Nfrt-H3aw,
Bsjt, H2tpyt, (anon.)

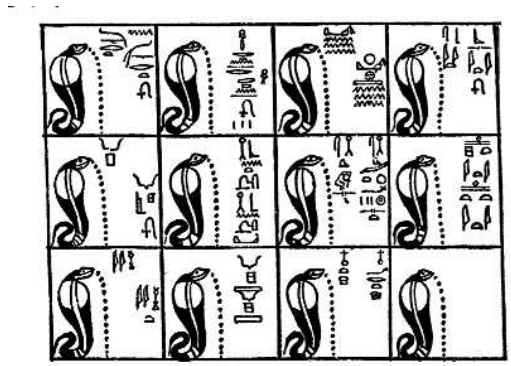
Praising Gods

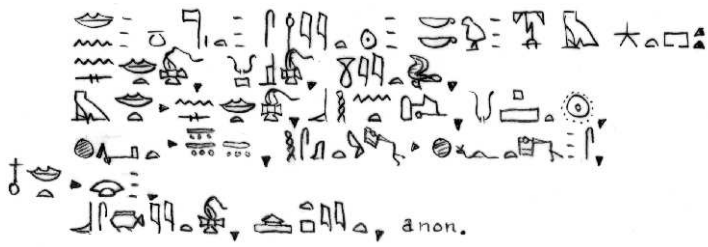
Names of gods who praise the lord of the pantheon:
Otherworldsman, Praise-Ra, Venerator,
(obsc.), Bellower, (obsc.)
Bull-of-Hell, Intelligent, Guardsman.

Rnw nw nt2rw dwayw nb psd2t:
Dwaty, H2knw-Ra2, Jaj,
{Maa2-Jdb}, Hmhmty, {Ka-Jrw},
Ka-Dwat, H2tmw-Jb, Jry.

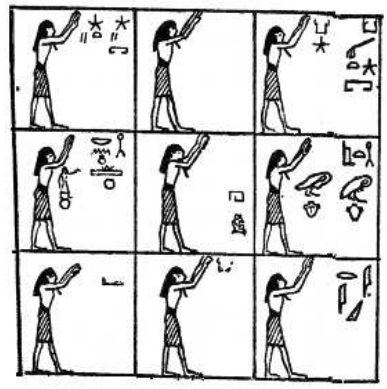
Hour One

Cobra Goddesses





Praising Gods



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Praising Goddesses

Names of goddesses who praise Ra who will cross
the great under-ocean of Wer-en-es:
Citizen-of-the-Necropolis, Invisible, Isis,
Nephthys, (obsc.), (anon.)
She-of-the-Waters, Speaker, Eastern,
Who-Sees-her-God, Who-Belongs-to-her-God, Extoller.

Rnw nw Nt2rwt ddwt hnw n Ra2 m a2pjw Wr-n-s:
Njwtyt, Jmntyt, Ast,
Nbt-H2wt, {H2r.sy}, (anon.)
*Ntyt, A2prt-*R*, Jabyt,*
Maat-Nt2r.s, Jryt-Nt2r.s, H2knt.

Postscript

This is the accurate account of how things really happen in Hell.
He who follows these patterns and carries out these procedures
is like the sun-god himself there.
It is knowledge beneficial even to those who still live, tested and entirely proven,
these are the secret directions exactly as they were written.

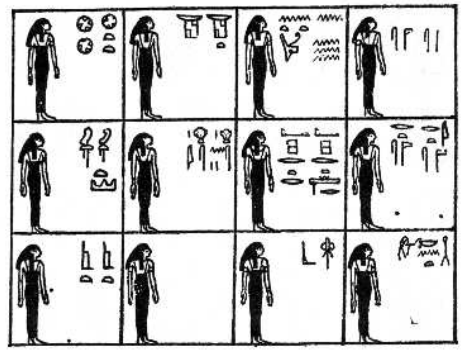
This gated region is comprised of 800 miles.
The hour which leads through this place
is named Smasher-of-the-Faces-of-Ra's-Enemies.

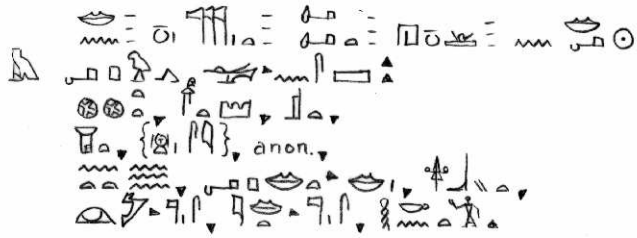
Jw jrj.tw nn mj ss2m pn m jmnt nt Dwat.
Jw jrj nw n ss2m mjty nt2r a2a d2s.f.
Jw a2h3 n.f tp-ta, ss2rw maa2 wrt
mj ss2m.sn s2ta m ss2.

Jtwr s2t mdwy h2r s2mt m a2rrt tn;
wnwt ss2mt a2rrt tn,
*Ws2m-H2awt-H3ftyw-*Ra*2 rn.s.*
Wnwt pw tpt nt grh2.

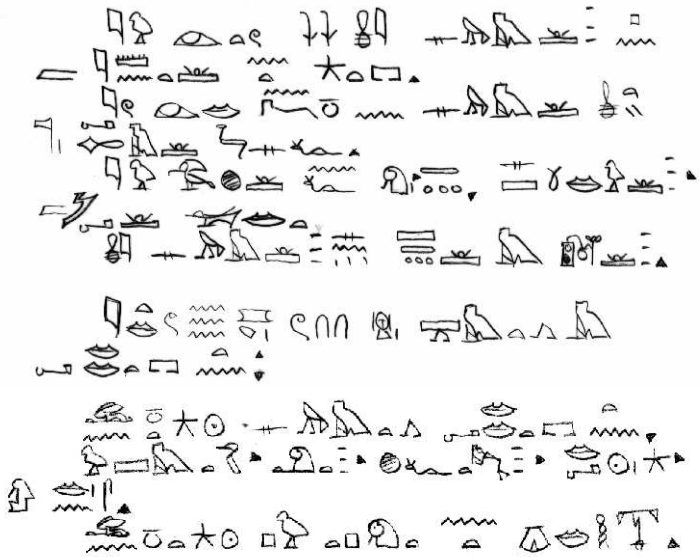
Hour One

Praising Goddesses





Post Script



Hour Two:

Realm of the Buried Seeds

Poem of the Second Hour

Words of the otherworld spirits to the great god Ra
when he enters "All-Devourer," gateway of the second hour,
when he sails the vast unbounded sea "Waters of Ra"
into the estuary *Wer-en-es*, "Land of Plenty:"

"O shine for us, Sun, great ghost
whom hell has welcomed and taken to itself,
inter your body, sun, your heavenly body,
in this consecrated ground prepared to recieve you:
here your life will be renewed.

"Come Ra, appear in your aspect of Kepri,
living Kepri, self-creating, ruler of hell,
travel through these fields, our protector,
bind the monster-snake Apophis, bash its ugly face!

"There's cheering in the sky, rejoicing underground
(for the Otherworld's above and also below us,)
applause as Ra displays to us his body — his corpse!
Shine out, Uraeus, you whose light reveals the gods,
bright uraeus upon the head of Ra, driving away the darkness
of the invisible world. You banish the serpent Apophis,
"The One Who Walks Without Legs."
Illume this heavy darkness so the corpse which was the daystar
can come back to life and make itself new!

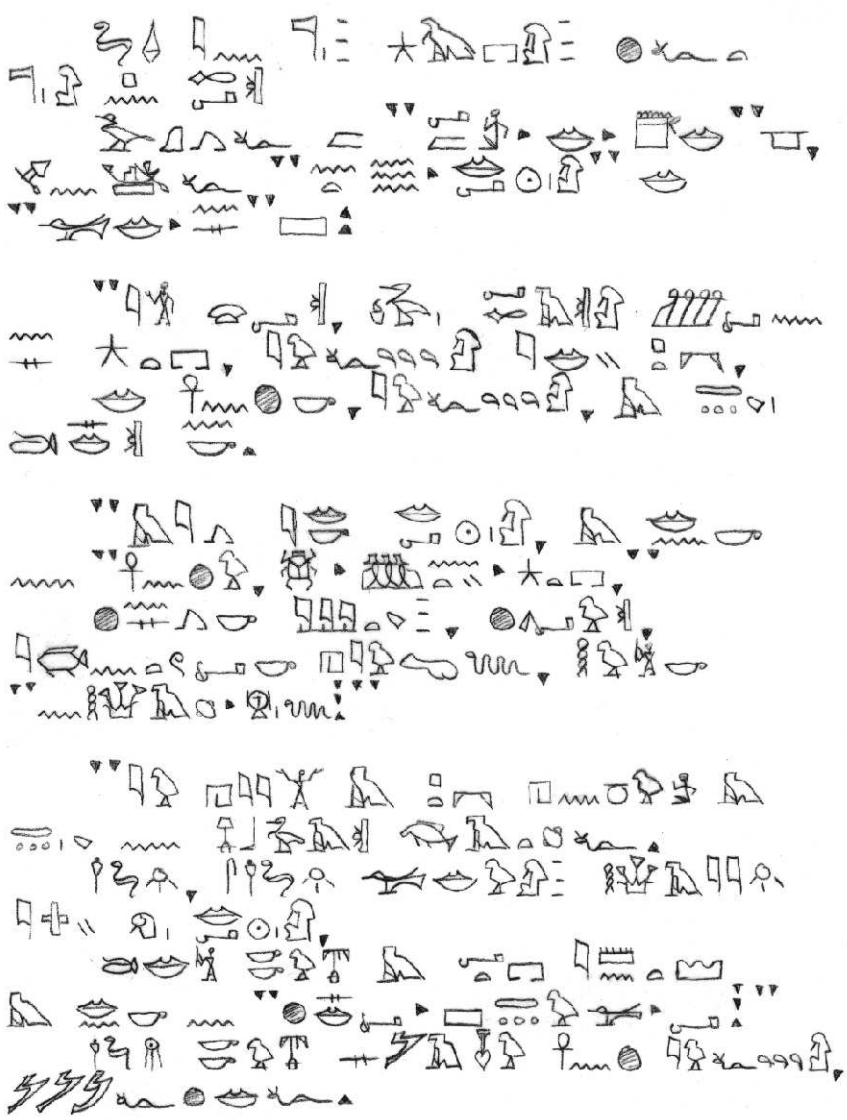
D2d-mdw jn nt2rw dwatyw h3ft nt2r pn a2a
a2q.f m "A2m-r-Dr," h4nj.f "Nt-Ra" r "Wr n.s:"

"J h3aj, ba a2a, ss2p(w).n n.s dwat, jwf jry pt,
r a2nh3.k, Jwf, m ta d2sr n.k.

"Mj jr.k Ra2{.k}, m rn.k m "Anh3w, H3prj H3nty Dwat,"
h3ns.k sh3wt, h3wjw, jnt2.k hjw, hwj.k "Nh2a-H2r!"

"Jw hy m pt hnw m ta n wba h4at.f.
Hd2, sh2d2 wrw h2ay jmy tp Ra2,
dr kkw m a2t jmnt m rn.k n "H3sr S2tw-A2!"[1]
Hd2 kkw smaw anh3 jwf mawj.f h3r.f

Hour Two



[1] Lit. "mysterious of limb."

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

"Welcome indeed to the West, O Ra!
for you have your ship, your underground pilots lead you true,
good is their aim and secret their strike, to shoot down Apophis
should he dare to attack
in this hour named "Protectress of Her Lord."

"Praise and praise again! Ra goes to his ghostly double,
his other self; he hastens, well-prepared, to seek his death!
Open, (obsc.), unclose the gates of earth! Proceed, Ra!
Strange how you move through the underworld like Osiris!
But you are protected and Osiris is protected
against your enemies. In peace, in peace, go westward as Kepri,
as "He Who Comes Into Being,"
go west till you reach the east, till you become dawn."

Commands of the great god Ra
to the underworld spirits who preside over *Wer-en-es*:

"Open your mysterious portals, gaze on my dead flesh,
draw back your shadows, let my corpse be seen!
You owe me this duty, for you have been given
the water of *Wer-en-es* to drink,
and the bread whose grain is grown down here is always ready for you,

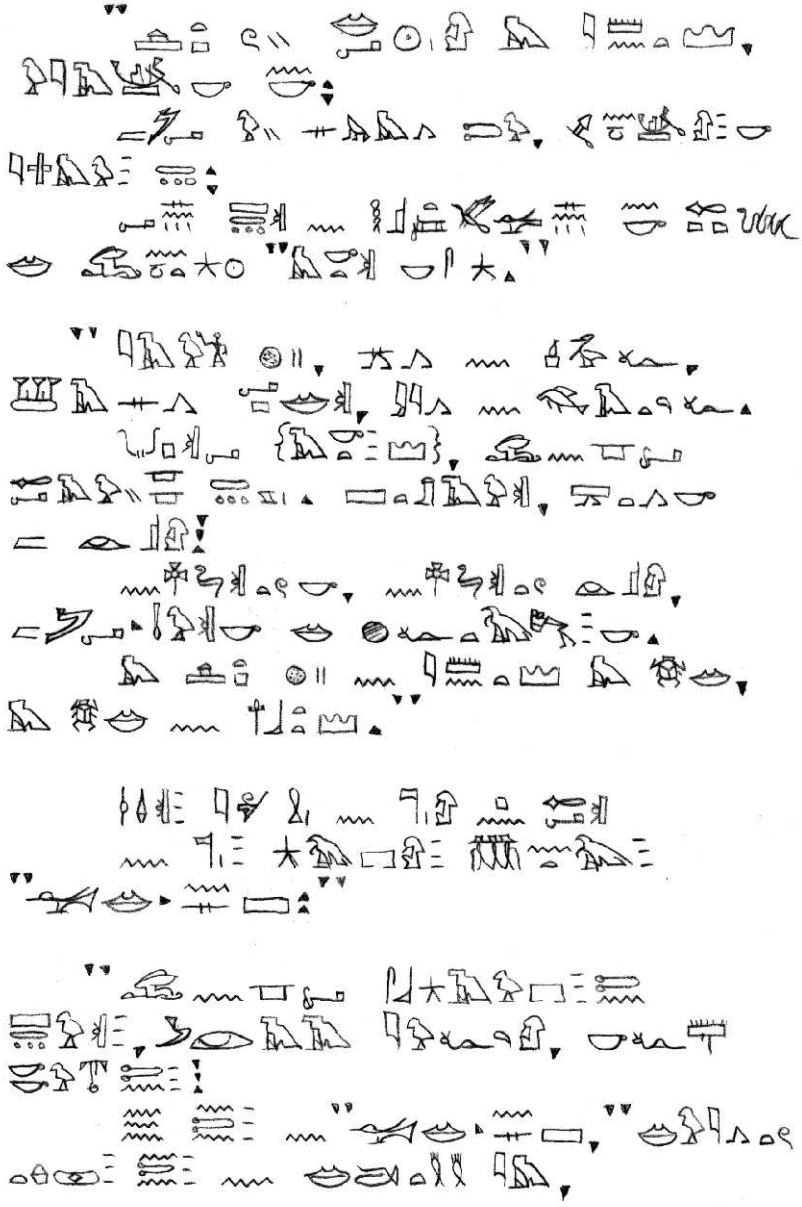
"H2tp wy Ra2 m Jmntt, wja.k n.k;
ma2a wy ss2m tw, h4nww.k jmyw ta;
a2.sn s2ta n h2tm.sn n.k A2pp r wnt "Mkt Nb.s."

"Jaw sp-sn, sbj(w) n ba.f, s2as(w) apr(w), jj n h4t.f.
Wpj, {akwt}, wn a2awy ta. S2taw, s2mt.k m Wsjr!
Nd2.tw.k, nd2.tw Wsjr, ma2a-h3rw.k r h3ftyw.k.
M-h2tp sp-sn n Jmnt m H3prj, m H3prj n{n} Jabtt."

Wd2-mdw jn h2m n nt2r pn a2a
n nt2rw dwatyw h3ntyw "Wr n.s:"

"Wn sbaw.t2n s2taw, maa jwf.j, kfj kkw.t2n!
mw n.t2n n "Wr n.s," rwj.tw t n.t2n n rdt jm,

Hour Two



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

you've been given air to breathe, you have not been destroyed,
your limbs are dry and perfectly preserved,
spicy-sweet to the smell, stinkless, undecayed;
your mummy-bandages have loosened, your legs have lost their stiffness
so you can walk, make wide your strides;
you possess your *bas* — they're not far away —
they've flown back to your bodies
so you can live, so you can speak words of power.

"Because your swords have been sharp to conquer Osiris' enemies:
your seasons and harvests will be sure, your years go on forever,
and your existence be renewed each time this hour of the night comes 'round.
Here may you dwell, (*obsc.*), with grain for your bread, and wine for your bliss.

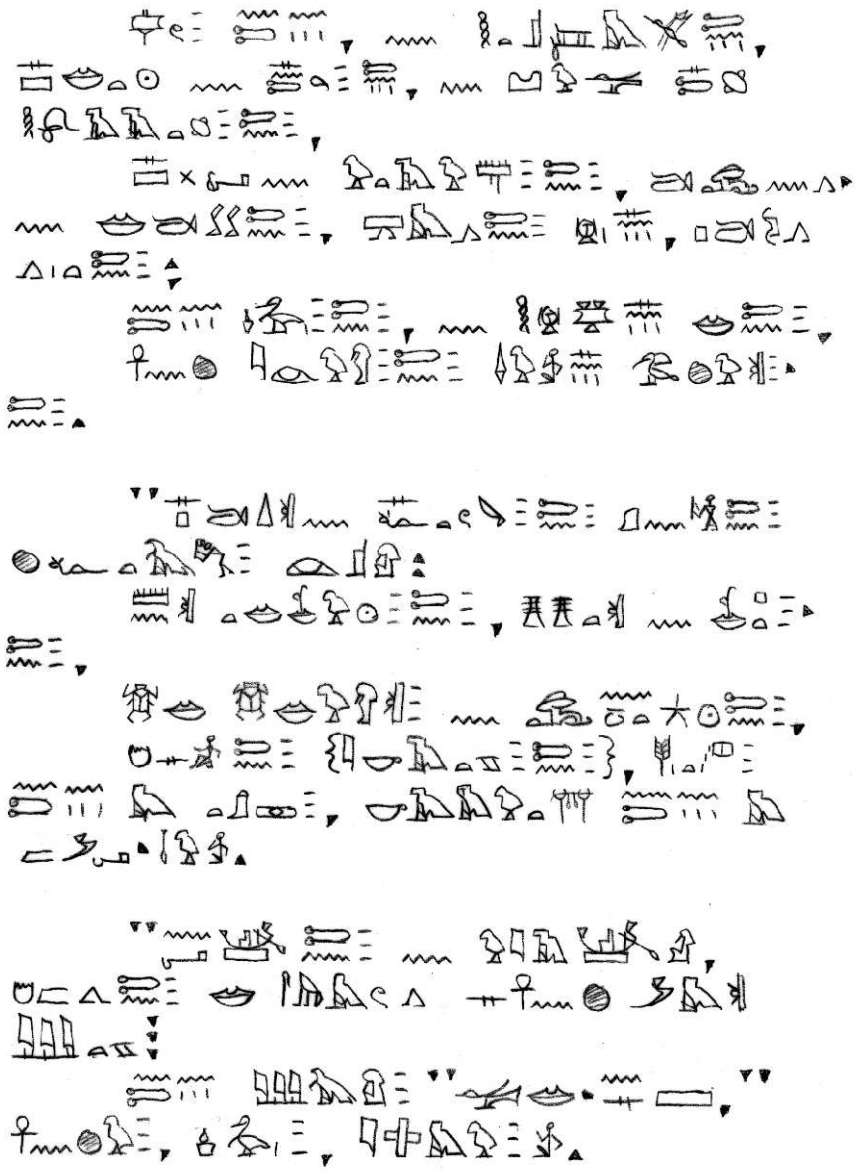
"Be the convoy of my ship, rejoin my company who make your fields live anew.
You are the farmers of *Wer-en-Es*, alive, undead, my people!

t2aw n.t2n, n h2tm.t2n, ss2rt n snt2w.t2n, n d2w stj h2waat.t2n,
ss2.n wtaw.t2n, dwn.n rdwy.t2n, s2m.t2n h2r.sn, pd2 nmtt.t2n;
{t2n} n.t2n baw.t2n, n h2r.sn r.t2n,
a2nh3 jrw.t2n mdw.sn ah3w.t2n.

"Spd.n sftw.t2n qnj.t2n h3ftyw Wsjr:
mn trw.t2n, d2dt n rnpwt.t2n,
h3pr h3prw n wnwt.t2n,
hms.t2n {jkawt.t2n,} bdt n.t2n m t, kamwt n.t2n m ma2a-h3rw.

"Naj.t2n n wja.j, h2ms.t2n r ss2m{w} sa2nh3 maw sh3wt!
Ntt2n sh3tyw "Wr n.s," a2nh3w, ba(w), jmyw.j.

Hour Two



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

You are my brave body-guards! Warriors to defend me from Apophis!

My ghostly form gives you life, this corpse that I am gives breath to your lungs!

You shall remain in this holy place: it is for you that it was ordained.

"Here, I am the day. I hold court in Hell.
As long as night passes overhead I drive back darkness
(*obsc.*) I travel by the light of the sun or the moon
for they are my eyes: wherever they shine, I go.
Hurrah! O spirits of Hell, I protect you!
Hurrah! I take care of you!"

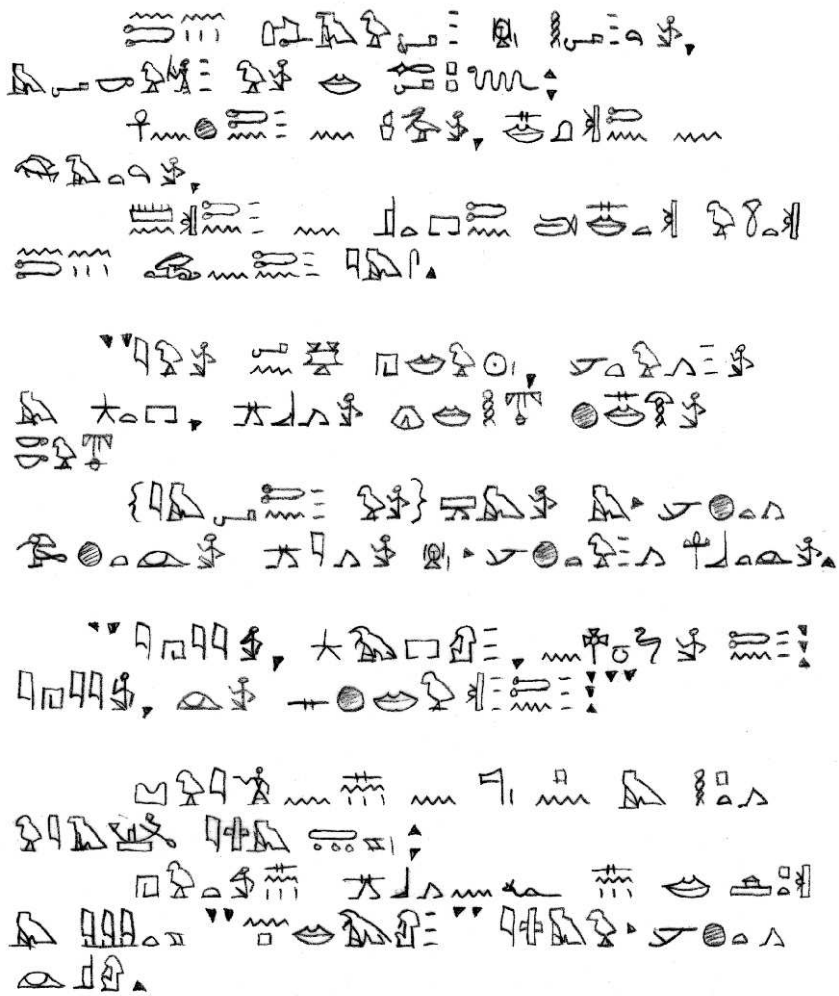
Thus the god will call to them as his underground boat sails by,
they'll wail in reply when he's gone to make port on the shores of hour three,
to visit the people of Osiris who live
at the further edge of the ocean *Wer-en-Es*.

Ntt2n a2h2a(w) h2r h2a2w.j, mkjw wj r A2pp;
a2nh3.t2n n ba.j, srq.t2n n h4at.j,
mn.t2n n st.t2n dsrt wd2t n.t2n wnn.t2n jm.s.

"Jw.j a2n hrw, h3tw.j m dwat, sbj.j grh2 h3sr.j kkw
{jmj.t2n wj} s2m.j m-h3t ah3t.j, sbj.j h2r h3tw jabt.j.
Jhy, dwatyw, nd2.j t2n! Jhy, jrj.j sh3rw.t2n!

D2wj.n.sn (n) nt2r pn m h2pt wja.f jmy ta;
hwt.sn, sbj.n.f sn r h2tp m sh3t Nprtyw jmyw m-h3t Wsjr

Hour Two



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Introduction

The god's stay on the sea of Wer-en-es, his ruddering between the fertile banks of the river called "Waters of Ra."

this underworld region of riverside farmland, these Elysian fields, are 2,000 miles long and 800 miles wide.

The great deity grants due portions of land to the gods who inhabit this region of Death's infinite city.

The name of this hour of the night is "Veteran Protectress of her Lord."

The name of this gate is "Devours Completely."

The great god allots fertile acres to the underworld spirits,
here in this farmland he takes care of all their needs.

Learn these spirits! He who knows their names may dwell among them,
the great god will give a share of land to that man too
here in the blessed acreage of *Wer-en-es*, which means "Abundance."

The man who knows the spirits here will stand beside the ghostly sun,

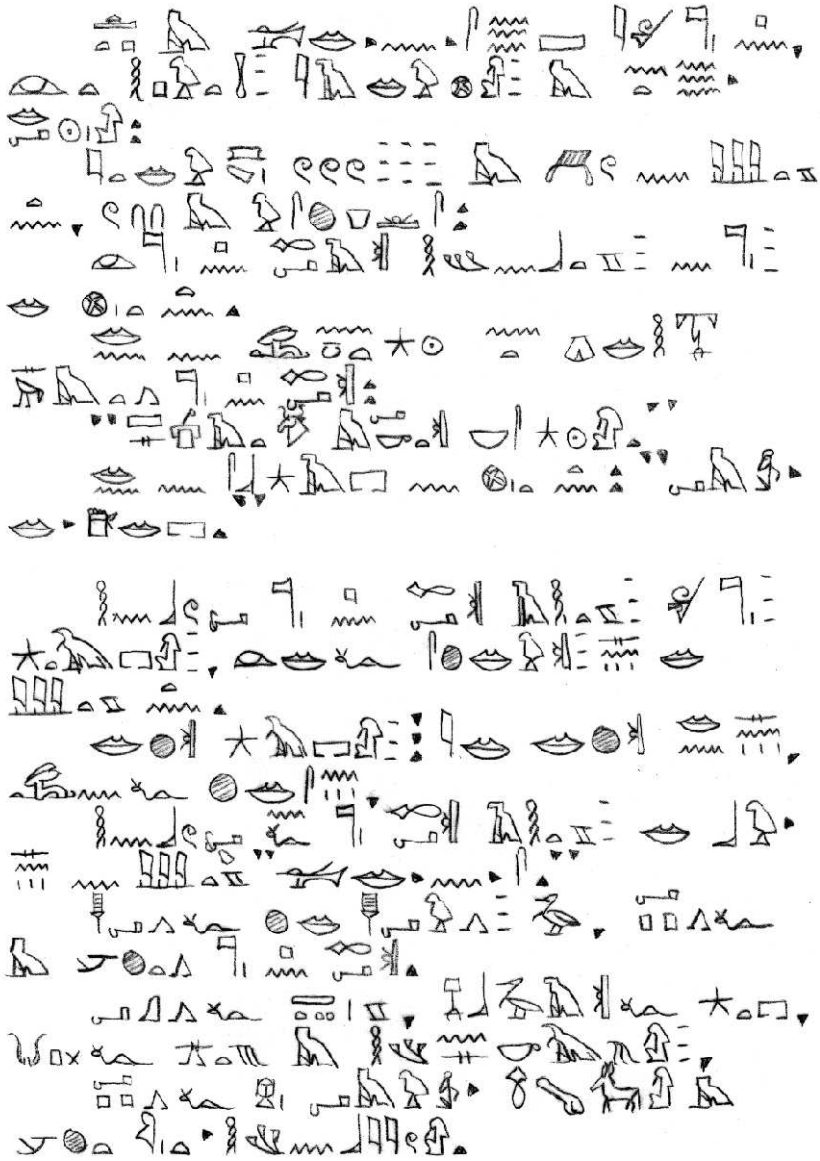
he'll march behind the great god.
Earth will receive him and Hell open for him.
He'll grab hairy demons by their manes and fling them,
even pass in peace the Swallower of Sinners,

H2pt m "Wr n.s" jn nt2r pn, jrjt-h2pwt[1] *Jarw m "Nt-Ra2:"*
jtrw h3mt-s2t psd2 m aw n sh3t tn, s2t md2wy m wsh3.s:
jr(r) nt2r pn a2a h2nbwt n nt2rw r njwt tn.
Rn n wnt nt grh2 s2mst nt2r pn a2a:
"S2sat Mkjt Nb.s." Rn n sba n njwt tn: "A2m r D2r."

H2nb nt2r pn a2a ah2wt n nt2rw dwatyw, jrr.f sh3rw.sn r sh3t tn.
Rh3 dwatyw! Jr rh3 rnw.sn, wn.f h3r.sn,
h2nb n.f nt2r pn aa2 ah2wt r bw.sn n sh3t Wr-n-s,
a2h2a2.f h3r a2h2a2w Ba, app.f m-h3t nt2r pn a2a,
a2q.f ta, wba.f Dwat, wpj.f sbt m h2kntyw,[2]
a2pp.f h2r A2mw-A2a m-h3t Maa2t H2nbyw.

[1] We would expect the plural rather in the idiom *d2sr h2pwt* (handle the rudder), but it is quite acceptable as a variation on *jrj h2pt*.

Hour Two



[2] Literally: "He will shave the hair from the shaggy ones, it is following Truth-of the-Field-Measure that he passes by the donkey eater." The overall sense of these obscure characters seems by context clear. The shaggy ones are demons who attack the guilty, and the equation of hair with power is evident from the long beard which is a royal emblem of power (*cf.* the hair of Samson.) The donkey is an animal closely associated with Seth, and so comes to be used as a synonym for sinner (*cf.* the parallel Christian metaphor of the goat.)

for he follows the god who is justice incarnate,
the deity who sees the fields correctly remeasured
and returned to their owners when the Nile's flood withdraws.
This man, Ra's follower, will eat bread with him
in the Night Barque, the ship that sails to the center of the planet.
He will take up the tow rope, help haul the boat forward
on its voyage through solid ancient earth.

The activities of underworld spirits here depicted really take place exactly as shown:
this is the whole Hell, from its shallows to its furthest deep unknown.
This book counts as a sacrificial offering to every deity here named.
It benefits a man even here on earth: this is infinitely true.

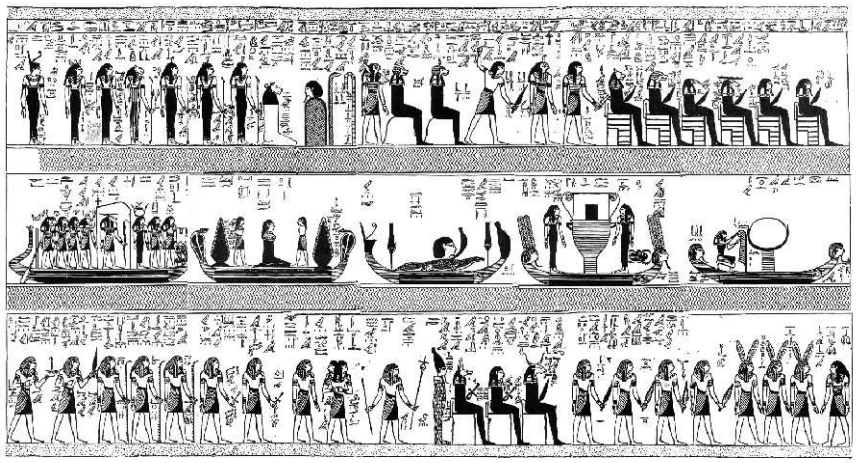
Jw.f wnm.f t r Wja-Ta, dj.tw n.f h2att Ta-Tbj Wja.[1]

Jw jrj.tw nn ss2mw n(w) baw Dwat m ss2,
mj qd pn, m jmnt nt Dwat — h2at-jmnt.
Jw ph4r.n.tw(.sn) n.sn tp ta m rnw.sn.
Jw ah3 n s tp-ta — maa2 h2h2 n sp.

[1] *Ta-Tbj* (spelled here *Ta-Twb*): an earth god mentioned in P.T. 560. *Tbj* itself remains obscure. Probably little more is in play here than an archaic-poetic term for earth.

Hour Two

Complete Image of the Hour



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Middle Register

Boat of Ra

"There's cheering in the sky, rejoicing underground
(for the Otherworld's above and also below us,)
applause as Ra displays to us his body — his corpse!

Boat of Ra: Isis, Nephthys, Wep-Wawet, Hathor as Mistress of the Ship, Sun-as-Corpse, Horus-as-Embalmer, Thoth the Lord of Truth, Wide-Awake, Speech, Steersman.

This is the same boat which occupied the middle register in the first hour, with a number of significant modifications. The two aspects of Maat (Truth) no longer accompany the boat: the rules of logic and reality no longer apply as we enter deeper into the Underworld.

In place of the Maats we find Isis and Nephthys, shown here as a pair of cobras in the prow. They are the traditionally shown together mourning over the corpse of Osiris. They intensify the impression that the day barque is now leading a funeral cortège.

The boat itself no longer has an ornamental mat hung from the prow. It has also lost its Udjat eye: this, a human eye with a falcon's eye-markings under it, represents generally life, strength and wellbeing. Its absence here is another indication of death, and probably also alludes to the extreme darkness of this portion of Hell. Until his eyes adjust, Ra must navigate by sound alone.

The rest of the crew is:

Wep-Wawet ("Opener of the Ways,") a god of whom little is known beyond his role in facilitating all passages, particularly birth and death.

Sia ("Perception,") a son of Ra, who here indicates Ra's careful scrutiny of the path ahead.

Hathor, who bears the title "Mistress of the Ship." The Egyptian Venus, Hathor is also the goddess who rules the entire birth-death-afterlife cycle.

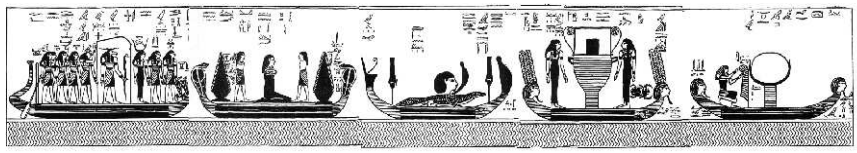
Ra stands in a shrine. He has a ram's head, which is to be read hieroglyphically: the symbol for ram (*ba*) is also used to write the word for ghost (*ba*). Ra is labeled *Yewef*, "flesh." In the first hour these details created an image of Ra as weakened, aging and subject to time. Here he is actually dead, and we should translate the word *yewef* in its secondary sense, as "corpse." This alteration in Ra's condition is clearly stated in the poem and confirmed here by the noted alterations in the boat. Also, while Ra carried a *was* ("power") scepter in the first hour, here he bears the serpent-staff of an underworld lord.

Horus stands behind the shrine of Ra. His name *Her-Hekenew* could mean either "Horus who utters praise" or "Horus of the fragrant oil," but whether we read this as a reference to eulogy or to embalming, the funereal sense is equally clear. His pose has altered here: now he has one armed lifted in a gesture of respect.

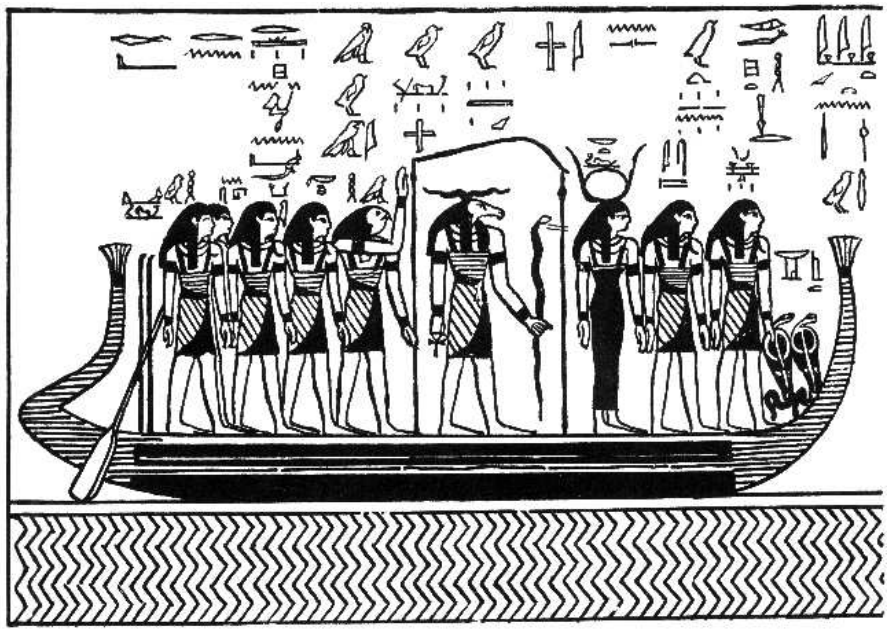
The next three figures, "Lord of Truth,"(an epithet of Thoth), "Wide-Awake," and "Speech" suggest the defense every dead soul must make before the tribunal of Osiris. The final figure, at the helm, is simply named "Steersman."

Hour Two

Middle Register



Boat of Ra



Wja Ra2: Ast, Nbt-H2wt, Wpj-Wawt, Sja, Nbt-Wja, Jwf, H2r-H2knw, Ka-Maa2t, Nhs, H2w, H3rp-Wja.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Boat of Grain

You owe me this duty, for you have been given the water of Wer-en-Es to drink,
and the bread whose grain is grown down here is always ready for you,

"Water-Traversing Barque," "Emblem of the Grain," "Neper."

A kneeling, armless goddess , "Emblem of the Grain," kneels between two armless gods both named Neper (the god who personifies grain,) who stand with their backs to stylized wheat ears. At this phase in our descent we have reached the level of buried and germinating seeds. Thus the convoy which accompanies Ra is led by the boat of the grain god, here manifesting as three figures. These are shown as armless because the wheat is essentially helpless, unable to protect itself against the scythe.

The grain-god Neper is also frequently equated with Osiris, so we may have here a different aspect of the second boat from the first hour, the one that showed the Kepri beetle between two Osirises. In that case the armlessness could indicate that the figures are mummified. The boat itself is named "Water-Traversing Barque." The abscence of the Wedjat eye on this boat as well would indicate that the wheat is here in its seed form, buried blind in the earth.

Wja-H4nj-Nt, Npr, Npr, Jat Kamwtt.

Crocodile Boat

The Gods' Ship.

The boat here has the crown of upper Egypt on its bow, and that of lower Egypt on its stern. Inside the boat, bracketing the crocodile, are two scepters which are the glyph for "power." This boat is equipped with a Wedjat eye, which indicates it is part of the convoy of *Wer-en-es'* inhabitants, who are accustomed to the darkness and can see in it.

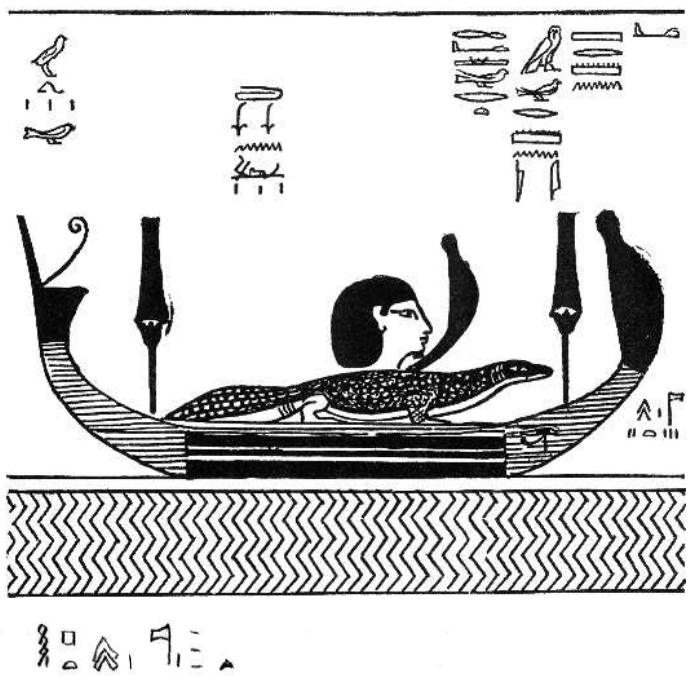
A god's head emerges from the back of the crocodile. Ra's night journey is often depicted as a course through the body of a crocodile or serpent, so the present image seems to mean that the god (Ra) is inside the crodile (night). Projecting in front of the head is a curved line which terminates in a crown of lower Egypt: this is a precise repetition of the upcurving prow of the boat itself. Thus the artist indicates that the god *in his boat* is inside the symbolic crocodile *on its boat*, that the god is moving through the night which is itself moving and changing with the passage of the hours.

H2pt Nt2rw.

Hour Two

Boat of Grain

Crocodile Boat



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Hathor Boat

What the Harvest Brings.

This boat is labeled (literally) "What *Wer-en-es* Carries." *Wer-en-es*, "Abundance," is the name of this region of waters. The boat shows a Hathor symbol between two goddesses (Isis and Nepthys). The symbol itself is a stylized *sistrum*. (We get this word from the Greek *seistron*, which means "rattle.") It is not only a symbol of Hathor, but also a musical instrument. As such, it consists of a handle ending in an oval frame intersected by loosely-fit horizontal metal rods, which sound when the sistum is shaken. The association of the rattle with Hathor is an easy one, since she is the goddess of music as well as love. The sistrum, along with the *menat* (a necklace of rattling beads) was indispensible in her rites.

When the sistrum is not just an instrument but also a fetish, as here, the handle ends in a Hathor head with cow ears and horns on either side. Budge's version is highly stylized: the face has no features, just lines for shading on it, and tiny handle-like ears above which wire-thin horns curl. Atop the head, between the horns, is a shrine, with a doorway. On an actual sistrum an image of Hathor would have been inside.

Hathor acts here in her role as Mistress of the Cemetery. The figures around her, Isis and Nephtys, when they are shown together, are mourners over the corpse of Osiris.

The scarab beetle (*keper*) shown horizontally at the prow is to be read hieroglyphically as the word for "to come to be," *keper*. The boat as a whole should be taken as a a sort of illustrated phrase: "the divine funeral is happening." The *wedjat* eye on the prow marks this boat also as part of the convoy from *Wer-en-es*.

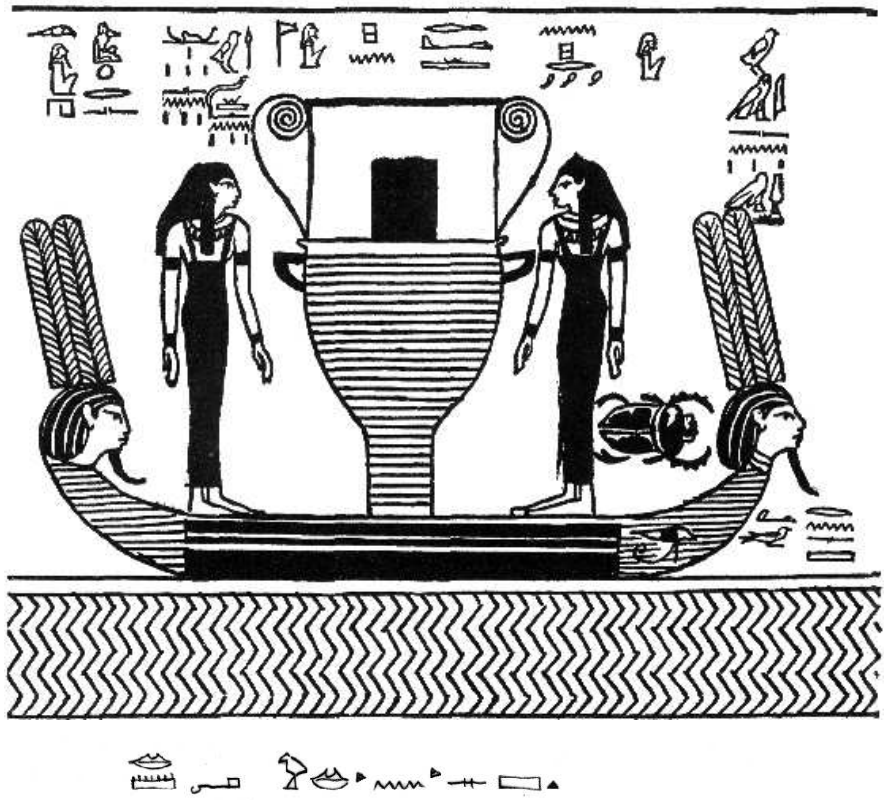
The prow and stern end in gods' heads (we know they are gods because of their beards) wearing double ostrich feathers: these are an archaic royal headdress, the significance of which remains obscure. These crowned heads mean no more than that the boat is itself a divine being.

Overall, the image reinforces the concept of Ra as a corpse being buried. The title relates this in turn to the idea of the year's end and the "death" of the reaped grain.

Rmnjw Wr-n-s.

Hour Two

Hathor Boat



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Thoth Boat

. . . may your seasons and harvests be sure, your years go on forever,
and your existence be renewed each time this hour of the night comes 'round.

"Ship of the Otherworldlings" with "Thoth Upholder of the World-Order."

In a boat, labeled "Ship of the Underworldlings" kneels a god labeled "He Who Upholds Truth." This is Thoth: he adores a single ostrich feather (which is the glyph for Truth or Order, *Maat*. In the boat is a stand holding a moon-disk which is combined with a moon-crescent to suggest the moon in all its phases.

Thoth, the god of mathematics, was associated (though not identified) with the moon because the moon's phases were an essential measure of time for the Egyptians. The boat as whole represents Time then. The god-heads at prow and stern seem to be no more than an indication that this is a cosmic boat, itself a divine and living being. Note the presence of the *wedjat* at the prow.

The depiction here of the gods' great timekeeper strengthens the harvest and year's end associations of the overall scene

Dpw Dwatyw, Rmnj Maa2t.

Text in the Middle Register

The text is lost.

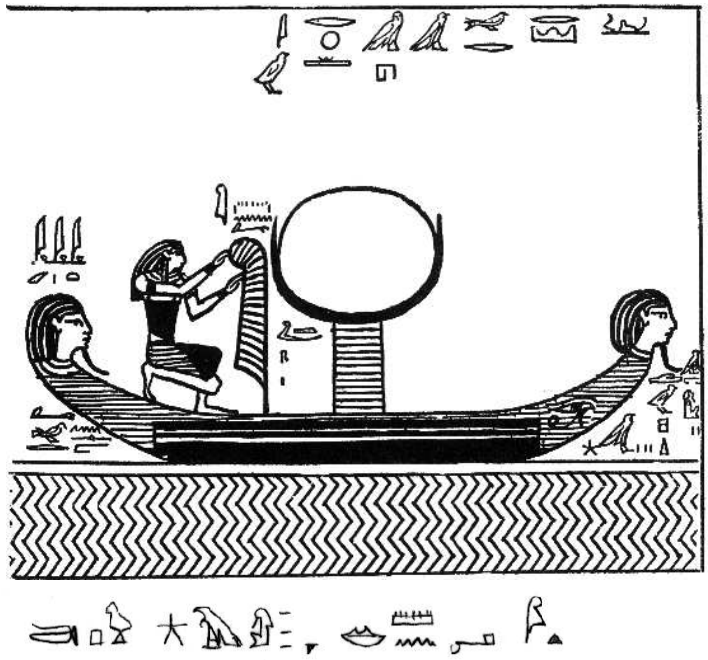
Upper and Lower Registers

The top two registers go together: they reflect Ra's entrance into the underworld via *Wer-en-es*, which is indicated by the horizontal bands filled with zig-zag lines.

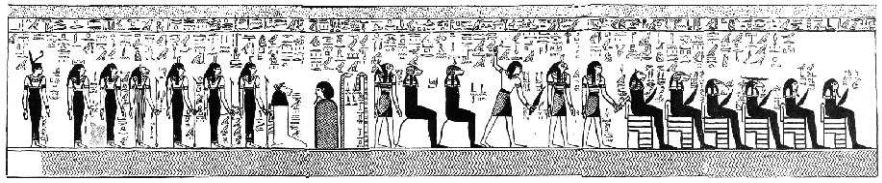
At the same time, the top and bottom registers parallel one another, with the entry of Ra being shown above, and its reception by Osiris shown below.

Hour Two

Thoth Boat



Upper Register



Lower Register

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Upper Register

. . . inter your body, sun, your heavenly body,
in this consecrated ground prepared to recieve you:
here your life will be renewed.

The Nine Goddesses of the Hour

In Budge's version the first two goddesses are not shown, and the series starts with the goddess wearing the red crown of Northern Egypt. The goddesses' names, in sequence, suggest the whole itinerary from eulogy through burial and corruption to rebirth.

The three who rule over the Valley of the Kings:
Maat, White Crown of Southern Egypt, Red Crown of Northern Egypt;

The Valley of the Kings is the location of the tombs on whose walls this book appears. Maat, "Truth," is is guarantor of the deceased's passage to paradise. The red and white crown are worn together to symbolize the king's rule of both Northern and Southern Egypt, The whole group with its superscription amounts to the phrase "His Majesty, may he rest in peace."

Beautiful Tomb, All-Devourer, Sekmet in Control

Beautiful Tomb has the symbol for "hills" on her head: Egypt's cemeteries were all located in the sandy hills at the western edge of the fertile Nile flood-plain. All-Devourer is a euphemism for the grave. Sekmet, like the lioness she resembles, is at home in the desert hill-country at the edge of settlement. She and the suceeding goddesses hold staves which are the glyph for "control."

Mistress of the Otherworldlings, Eater of the Dead, Self- Begotten.

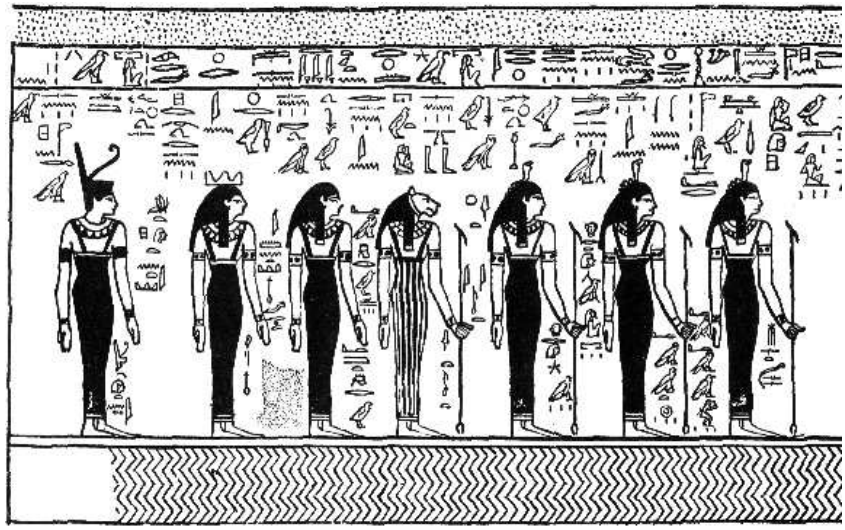
All three goddesses wear a uraeus, a royal cobra-crown, on their heads. "Eater of the Dead" and "Self-Begotten" refer to decay and regeneration.

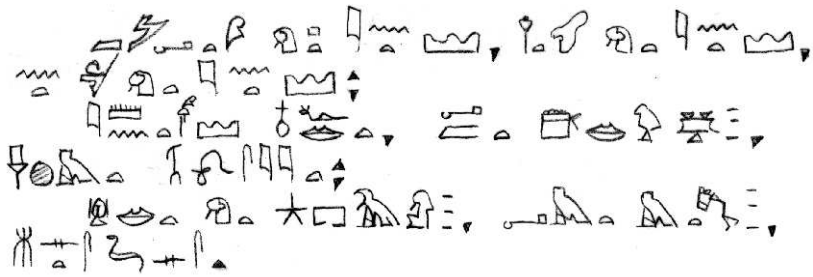
These twelve hour-goddesses all bear names with direct reference to the cemetery. We have now left the world of the living and entered the grave. This impression is intensified by the suceeding gods in the register, the majority of whom are shown as mummies.

Maa2t Tpyt Jnt, H2d2t Tpyt Jnt, Nt Tpyt Jnt,
Jmnt Nfrt, A2mt D2rw, Sh3mt Wasyt,
H2ryt Tpyt Dwatyw, A2mt Mtw, Msjt-Sy-D2s.s.

Hour Two

Nine Goddesses of the Hour





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Psyche of Ra

Proceed, Ra! Strange how you move through the underworld like Osiris!
But you are protected and Osiris is protected against your enemies.

This next series shows a number of figures, all with some relation to Osiris or Ra:

Keeps the Transfigured Souls in Awe,

a kneeling, mummified lion-headed figure, (Sekmet?);

Decree of Osiris,

a stele with human head facing backwards (*to us,* forwards);

Underworld Staff of Osiris, Herdsman's Staff of Osiris

a serpent staff, then a shepherd's staff;

Two-Heads,

a figure with the heads of Seth (looking backwards) and Horus (looking forwards) on a single neck;

Ape and Baboon,

two throned, mummified figures;

Overthrower-and-Beheader-of-Ghosts,

a figure in the pose of a conquering pharaoh,with a knife in his forward hand, the other arm raised over his head (which, by the pose, should be holding a club):

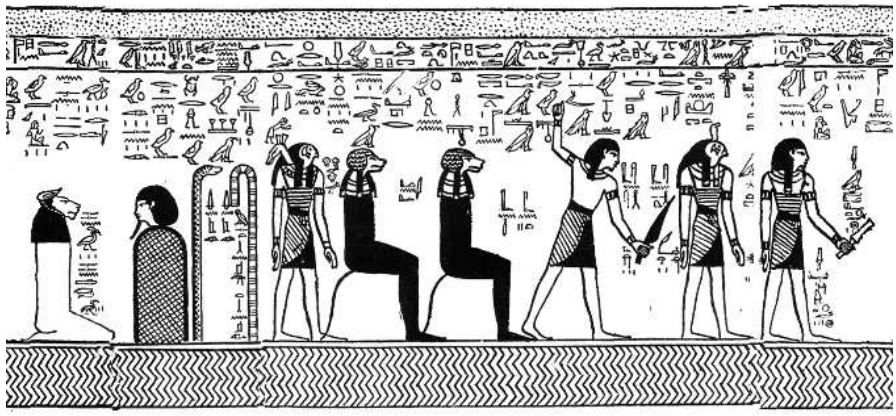
Underworld Horus, Strong-Arm-Smiter-of-His-Enemies.

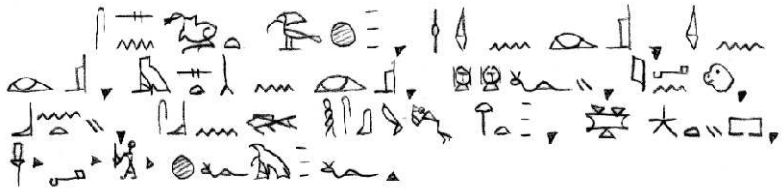
Like the similar series of figures who immediately followed the barque of Ra in the first hour, these are a composite portrait of Ra's psychology. The destructive (Seth) and creative (Horus) aspects of his being are being synthesized into a powerful unity (Two Heads): Ra is becoming literally and pictorially "resolved." This establishes his control over the underworld (the Serpent staff) without relinquishing his control of the upper world, which is shown by the shepherd's staff and the Osiris-stele looking "backwards" towards the world of the living. The Osiris stele represents the original good laws established when Osiris still reigned on earth.

The underground depth to which we have descended is shown by the two baboon mummies who follow — su unlike the greeting and praising baboons who dominated the first hour.

Hour Two

Psyche of Ra





Ssnd2t Ah3w, Wd2-Mdw n Wsjr, Mdw n Wsjr, Mst n Wsjr, Hrwy.fy, Ja2n, Bntj, Sbn-H2sq-S2wt, H2r Dwaty, Sh3m-A2-Hwj-H3ftyw.f.

In addition, Ra continues to develop his role as judge and punisher of the dead with the first figure, Sekmet, and then the three final figures, Underworld Horus surrounded by armed retainers.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

College of Judges

Six throned, mummified figures, each holding a knife:

Cook and Butcher of *Bas,*

a lion-headed Sekmet, perhaps suggesting the lions who roam the western desert and its cemeteries. Sekmet typically represents the angry, punishing aspect of the sun.

Dead Flesh Enthroned, Ibis Enthroned,

Two depictions of Thoth. The god of mathematics and measurement is typically rendered as a baboon, since these creatures, rooster-like, know the exact moment of sunrise and signalize it by their howls. There follows the other typical representation of Thoth, as an an ibis (no satisfactory explanation for this symbolism has yet been proposed.) Thoth, the precise reckoner, is the classic "prosecutor" of the underworld, and is depicted as the one writing down the results when Anubis weighs the heart of the deceased in the well-known scene from the Book of the Dead.

Judge Knum,

ramheaded creator-god, also a standard underworld judge;

Judge Geb ,

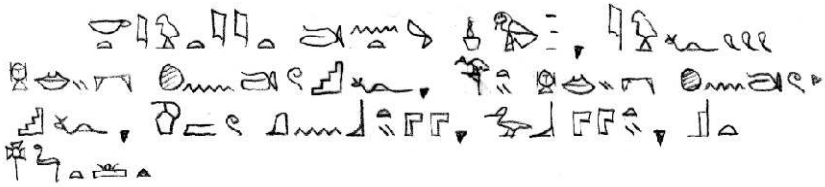
the earth-god, who frequently appears in funerary literature as a judge of the dead;

Interrogating Isis.

Ktjwtyt-Dnt-Baw, Jwf-h2ry-H3ndw.f, D2h2wty-h2ry-H3ndw.f, H4nmw Qnbty, Gb Qnbty, Ast Nd2t.

Hour Two

College of Judges



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Text in the Upper Register

The following spirits are of this sort. They worship Ra as soon as he reaches them.

It is the sound of their voices that leads him through the darkness to where they are.

After he's given them their orders, he goes; the sound of their laments accompanies him.

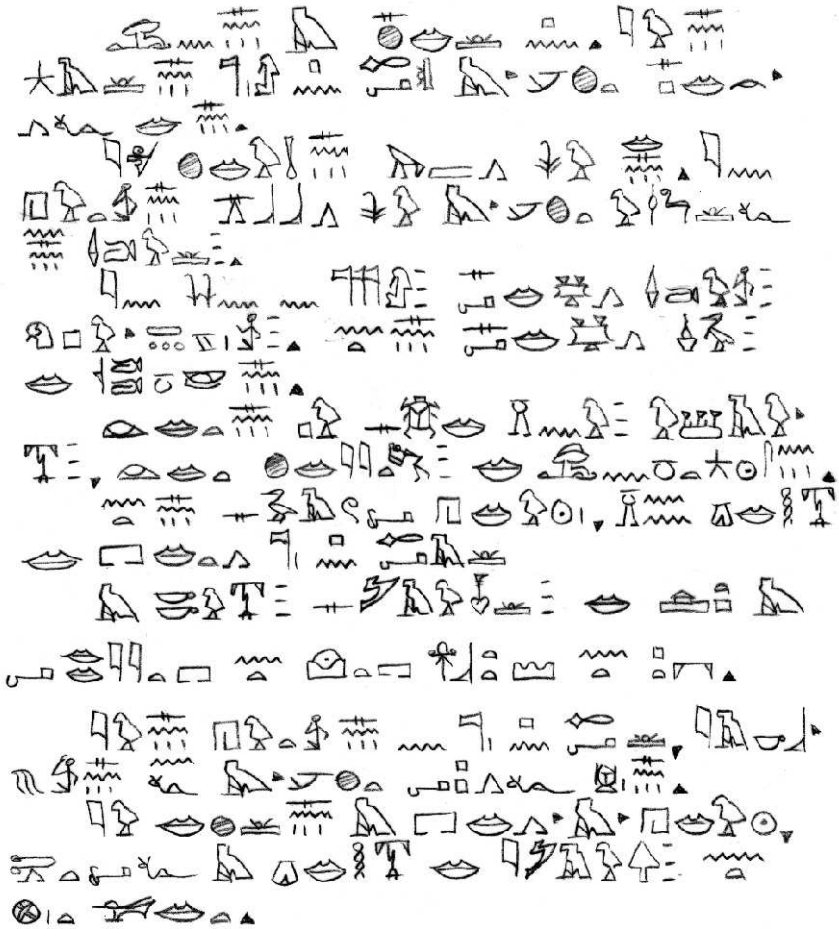
These gods are in charge of each evening's food offering,
they speed upwards the prayers of men on earth,
they see to it an animal is slaughtered at the tomb door as night falls,
they call back the wandering *ba*
to eat the sacrificial food then sleep in its mummified body.

These gods bring on night and receive descending day below the horizon,
when the sun sinks underground they watch over it
till that great god emerges from the dense darkness,
ends his journey in the eastern portal of the sky.
They grieve then over losing him,
they sorrow as he passes them by.

Those who know these spirits go forth into sunlight by day as *bas*,
and at night they're brought to the cool groves of the Otherworld,
beneath the broad-leaved trees of the city of so many.

Wnn.sn m sh3r pn: jw.sn dwa.sn n nt2r pn a2a m-h3t spr.f r.sn.
Jn h3rw.sn ss2m sw r.sn. Jn hwt.sn sbb sw m-h3t wd2.f n.sn mdw.
Jn nn n nt2rw sa2r mdw tpyw-ta. Ntsn sa2r baw r qdd.sn.
Jrjt.sn pw sh3pr jnw ws2aw, jrj.t(w) h3rywt r wnwt.sn.
Ntsn saw hrw, jnn grh2 r prjt nt2r pn a2a
m kkw smaw r h2tp m a2rrt nt ah3t jabtt nt pt.
Jw.sn hwt.sn n nt2r pn a2a, jakb.sn n.f m-h3t a2pp.f h2r.sn.
Jw rh3 sn, m prj-m-hrw, jt2j.tw.f m grh2 r jmaw njwt wrt.

Hour Two



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Lower Register

Spirits of Havest-Time

Beginner of the Seasons, Seasonal, Moves Along the Seasons, Hand Raised to Cut.

The lower register begins with three figures (Budge has only one) striding forward, making an offering with their left hands. What they are carrying is the glyph for "season," an upright line curved back at the top, in what looks like a dish. It is a palm-branch, stripped of its leaves and notched to serve as a calendar. The dish-like thing is actually a pair of lips, and is used purely phonetically as the "r" in the word for season, *ter*. The three figures (only one shown here) are followed by a fourth (shown) holding up a knife. The four of them are spirits of harvest-time, offering the season's yeild to Ra.

Wpj Trw, Jry Trw, Fajw, A2 Fajw.

Spirits of the Harvest

Annual, Wheat-Sheaf, Bread

Three figures holding full-size notched palm-leaf calendars.

Rnpty, Mah3y, Nh2rw.

Hour Two

Spirits of Harvest-Time

Spirits of the Harvest

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Aspects of Sirius

Great Brightness, Great Rejuvenated One, Great Shiner

In late July the dog star, Sirius, appears in the Egyptian sky, marking the time of harvest and the beginning of the Nile's annual rise. Budge's version is defective: all three figures here should be holding stars, not *anks,* in their hands.

Hd2d2wty, H2wn Wr, H2d Wr.

Psyche of Osiris

Emerging Contradictions, Radiant Ghost, The Kindly One.

Parallel to the psyche of Ra group in the top register, we have here three depictions of Osiris' inner being. The first of these, Emerging Contradictions, (literally, "Two Faces, Two Arms Within Him,") represents the double being of Osiris — to this we shall return, it is the great mystery and principal theme of the poem as a whole. Next is Radiant Ghost, a figure with two star-tipped sceptres. This is Osiris in his aspect of king of night, when all that is visible is so only through its own radiance, where everything glimmers and nothing's all that clear. The starry image also plays on very ancient Egyptian conceptions of the afterlife, which placed it, not underground, but in the night sky. Finally we see the mummified, crowned figure of *Osiris-Wenen-Nefer*, "The Kindly One," Osiris in his role as lord of the earth's agricultural wealth, provider of food for all who live.

H2rwy.fy-A2wy.fy-m-H2nw.f, Ah3y, Wsjr-Wnn-Nfr.

Hour Two

Aspects of Sirius

Psyche of Osiris

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Judges of the Dead

Lord of the Graveyard, (*obsc.*), Eater of Sinners.

Parallel to the college of judges above in the top register, these continue the same idea. The first two figures should be holding stars not *anks* in their laps, while the third is correctly represented with a knife. The jackal-headed judge, Lord of the Graveyard, is an allusion to Anubis the god of embalming, and to the jackals who nightly prowl the edges of settlment, where the cemeteries are.

Nb Ta D2sr, {Ah4byt}, A2mw A2a.

Reapers and Guardian

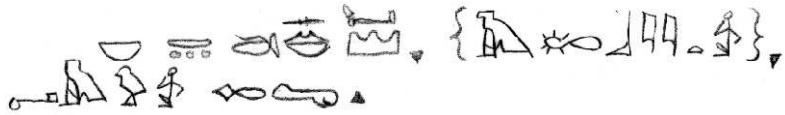
(All names obscure.)

Four figures with knives, then three crowned with ears of grain. Their names are inconsistent and obscure, but they seem, to continue the ideas of harvest and last judgement. The final figure is identified as the "guardian of this field" mentioned in the text to this register. He is facing backwards (to us, forwards), away from the procession, guarding the entire group from behind.

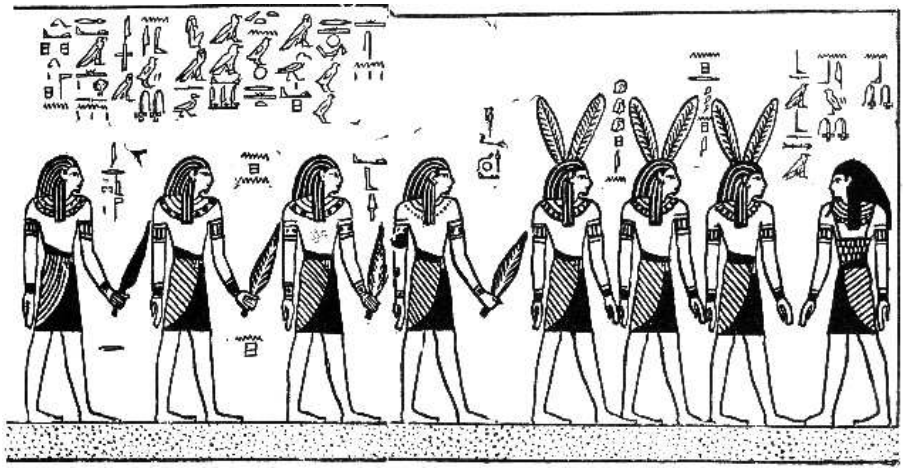
{Jrj St Nt2r, Npn(t), A2ba, H2d2-A2, Tp Tpy, Npr, Bsa, Nbjwy}.

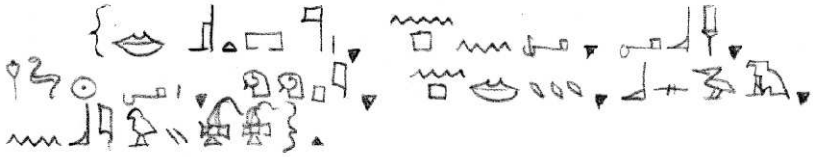
Hour Two

Judges of the Dead



Reapers and Guardian





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Text in the Lower Register

This is what the spirits look like
when they acknowlege Ra's lordship over the seasons,
and give him homage as the lord of Time,
see, they hold notched reeds to tally the year,
to offer him each year's yeild.
The great god Ra utters his decrees when they call to him:
it's the sound of his voice that makes them live,
for their throats draw breath only when he speaks to them,
when he assigns to them their duties,
when he grants them back all the plants that grow in their fields.
All produce is sacrifice to the the gods, to whom it is truly due —
they accept and then return the food to mankind as a gift.

These are the ones who offer up the crops of rich *Wer-en-es*
to the gods who travel in Ra's entourage,
these are the ones who give cool water
to the transfigured souls according to Ra's command,
these are the ones who fan the coals to burn up Ra's enemies,
these are the ones who fling the hearts
of the wicked on the fire.

Later, they weep, they grieve, when the great god passes from them.
"Amid Flames" is the guardian of this field.
Whoever knows these things is a soul transfigured, well-prepared,
a soul these spirits guard.

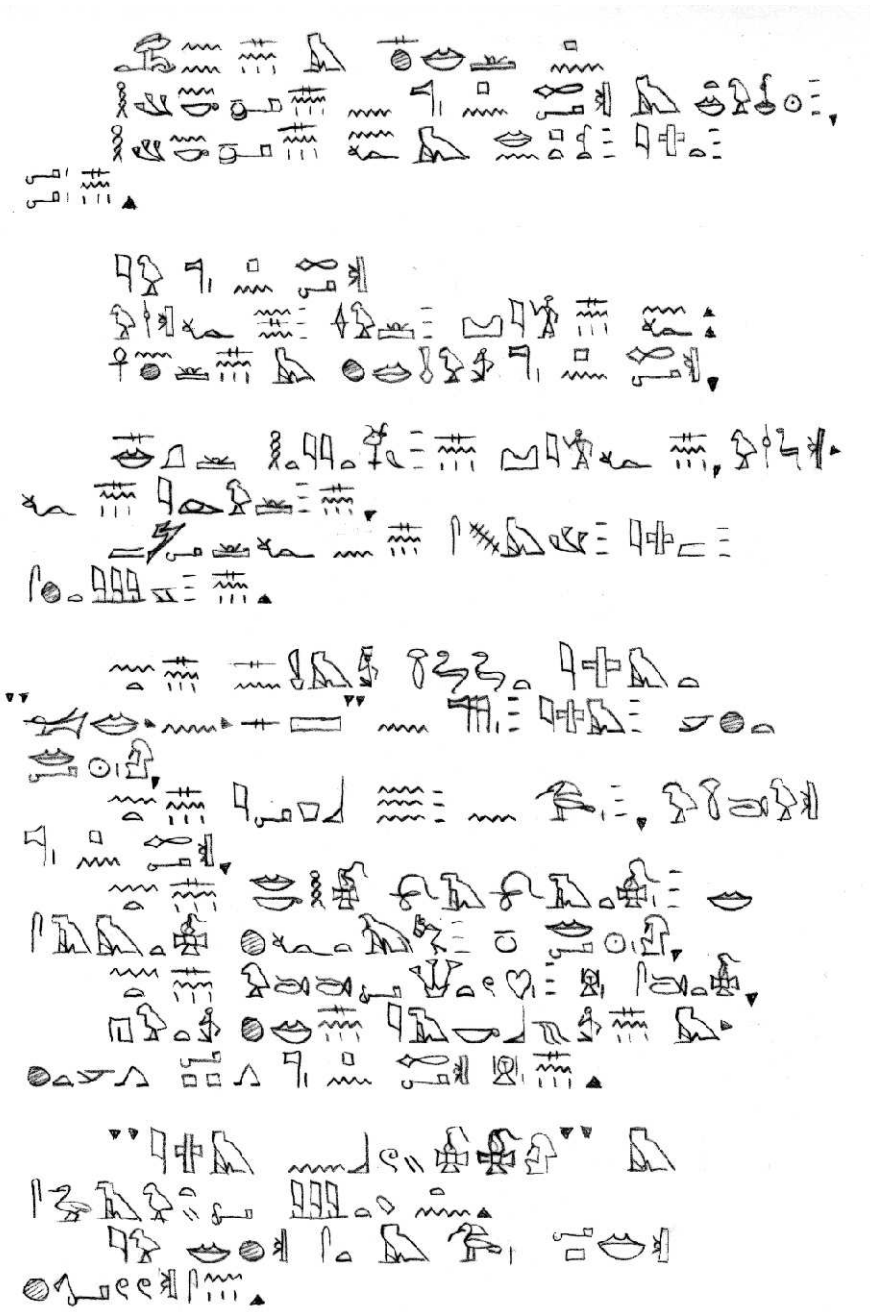
Wnn.sn m sh3r pn
h2nk.sn n nt2r pn a2a m trw,
h2nk.sn n.f rnpwt jmy(w)t a2wy.sn.

Jw nt2r pn a2a,
wd2.f n.sn mdw d2wj.sn n.f:
a2nh3.sn m h3rw nt2r pn a2a,

srq h2tywt.sn d2wj.f sn, wd2.f sn jryw.sn,
maa2.f n.sn smw jmyw sh2wt.sn.

Ntsn snm wad2d2t jmyt Wr-n.s n nt2rw jmyw h3t Ra2,
ntsn ja2b mw n ah3w, wd2(w) nt2r pn a2a,
ntsn rkh2 wawat r samt h3ftyw nw Ra2,
ntsn wdd h2atyw h2r sd2ty,

Hour Two



hwt.h3r.sn, jaqb.sn m-h3t a2pp nt2r pn a2a h2r.sn.

"Jmy Nbjwy" m sawty sh3t tn.
Jw rh3 st m ah3 a2pr(w) h3wjw.sn.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Post-Script

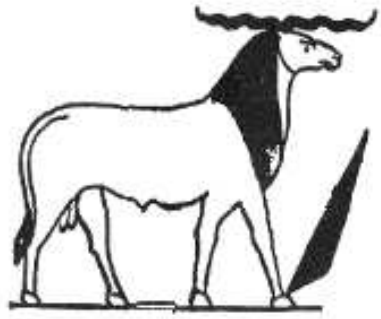
This is an accurate acount of how things really happen in Hell.
He who knows these words is already very close to the Other World.
This is knowlege beneficial even to those who still live. It is accurate.
The name of this hour is: "Guardian-of-Her-Lord.".

Jw jrj.tw nn my ss2m pn m jmnt nt a2t.
Jw rh3 mdw pn m a2r h3r dwatyw.
Jw ah3 n s tp-ta: ma2a s(t).

Wnt tn: "S2sat-Mkjt-Nb.s."

Hour Two

Hour Three:



Ghost World

Poem of the Third Hour

Words of the mysterious spirits to the great god
as he enters the third hour, as he passes through the gate
named "Grab," when he sails the sea
named "Osiris is the Only Source of All Gifts":

"This way, rowers of the corpse of God, make port here, you who convey
the very body of Ra, he who ascends through hell,
granter of breath and speech to our dead lips,
Ra who brings himself back to life!

"Let your ghost, your *ba* appear O Ra, let your power be known,
let your two *Maats* lead you along the road of darkness,
for the sky belongs to your *ba*, but the earth to your corpse,
for that rare and unexampled creature, the uraeus-snake,
rises to protect you at your ship's bow,
and jackals, who appear when night does,
at the edge of settlement, where the dead are,
graveyard and desert prowling jackals are harnessed to your barque,
they tow you by the bow-ropes
and the dead hold out their arms to welcome you
as "the Old Man," the sun who has set.

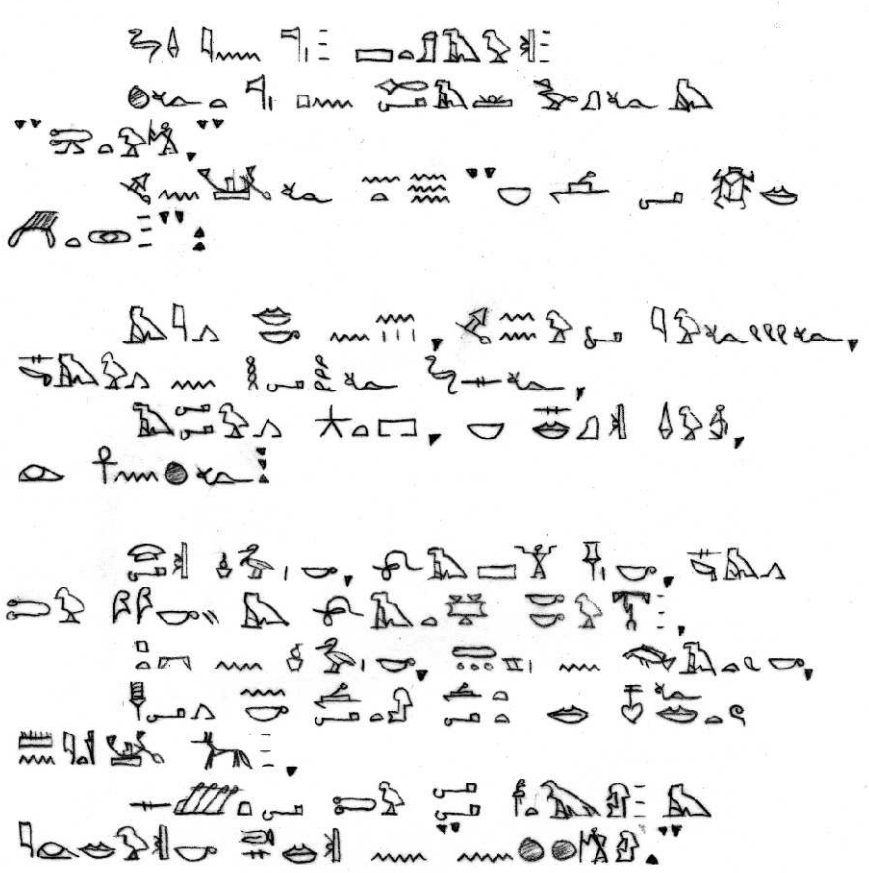
D2d-mdw n nt2rw s2taw
h3ft nt2r pn a2a a2q.f m "Jt2jw,"
h4nj.f nt "Nb Wa2 Dj H3pr{t} Awt":

"Mj r.k n.n, h4nnw jwf.f, ss2mw n h2a2w.f d2s.f,
aa2a2jw Dwat, nb srq mdw, jrj a2nh3.f.

"H3a2j ba.k, was2 sh3m.k, ss2m t2w Ma2aty.ky m wat kkw,
pt n ba.k, ta n h4at.k,
a2h2a2 n.k Wa2t wa2tyt n nfrt mnjt sabw,[1]
s2sp t2w a2wy jmntyw m jrw.k d2sr n "Nh3h3."

[1] Lit.: "at the ship's bow-rope which (relative verb) jackals pull along."

Hour Three



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

"How beautiful is Ra in the sight of those whose home
is the dark west, how welcome it is to these to hear again —
and to hear *you* arriving there amid the hidden,
good it is when Ra's light appears there where all form was lost,
inked away and cancelled, every contour flattened under blackness.
Come to us, Ra, sunset Ra, golden scarab (*obsc.*),
row between these banks of death's river, travel through these fields of paradise:
this journey is how you transform yourself here in the land that belongs to you.
The limitless city of the lost applauds you as you pause within its gates

(*line corrupt.*)
and Osiris himself adds his praise from the dark place where his body lies:
He says: "O Ra, you who have gone down to rest in peace, O Ra, defeater of your enemies,
triumphant over all opponents, disk of glory,
shining *ba* who makes the whole earth bright!"

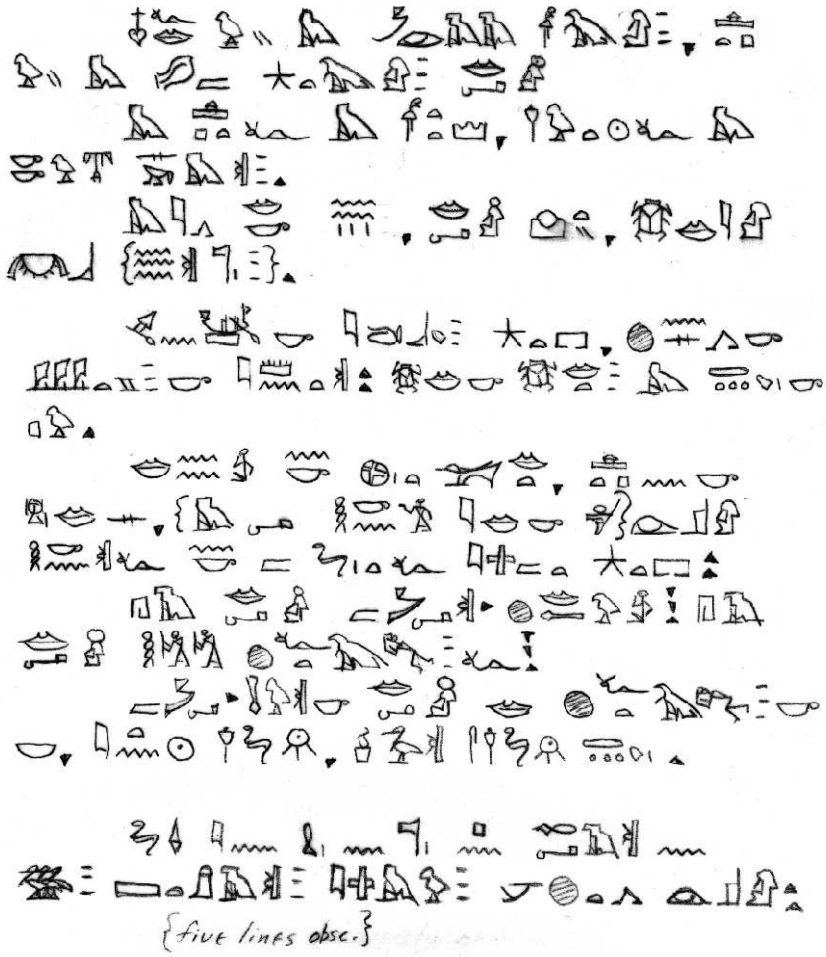
Speech of his majesty, the great god Ra, to the mysterious spirits in Osiris' entourage:
(*first five lines corrupt*).

"Nfr wy m maa jmntyw, h2tp wy m sd2m jmntyw Ra2
m h2pt.f m jmntt, h2d2wt.f m kkw ss2mw.[1]
Mj r.k n.n, Ra2 ah3ty, H3prj nbw, {mw nt2r}.
H4nj.k jdbw dwat, h3ns.k sh3wt.k jmnt: h3pr.k hprwt m ta.k pw.
Rnn n.k njwt wrt, h2tp n.k h2r.s {m-a2 h2kn jr.k n} Wsjr h2kn.f n.k m d2t.f jmyt dwat:
Ha Ra2 ma2a-h3rw! Ha Ra2 h2wj h3ftyw.f!
Maa2-h3rw.k Ra2 r h3ftyw.k nb(w), jtn h2d2, ba sh2d2 ta."

D2d-mdw jn h2m (n) nt2r pn a2a n baw s2taw jmyw h3t Wsjr:
(five lines corrupt)

[1] Lit.: "in the darkness of forms."

Hour Three



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

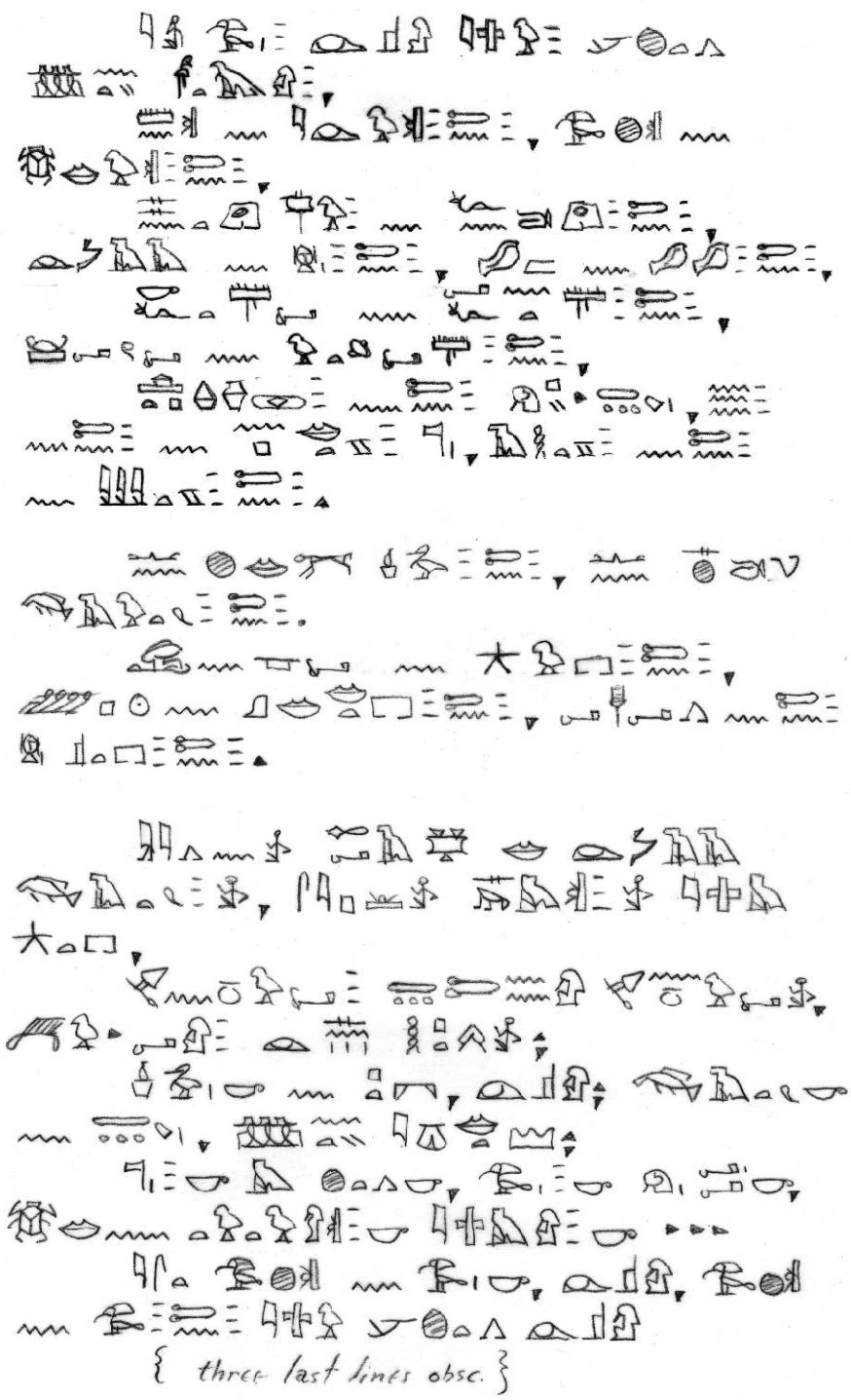
"O ghosts who follow Osiris, courtiers of the king of Hell,
you will endure as you are, shining, real,
your nostrils will always draw air, your eyes ever see, your ears hear,
you shall be unwrapped and freed from the tops of your turbans
down to the last bandage,
food will always be offered at your graves up above,
and water never fail you here on Osiris' shores,
you'll receive a field of your own, your farmland here to till.
Your *bas* shall fly free, never fall — rely on this,
Your preserved corpse will never be reduced to the status of the merely dead:
you'll not decay, never be unmade.
Your tombs, your homes here, let them open and receive my light;
stand up in your doorways, salute me, your midnight sun!

"I have come here to see my own corpse,
to examine my other self, my form that stays here in hell
and I've come on a ship manned by the graveyard shift,
whose arms grew strong at the shovel long before they touched oar.
I, the sun, am your *ba*, your freed soul, Osiris, and as such I belong in the sky,
but I came here because you are in the earth, Osiris.
You, Osiris, are my self; you belong to the earth here, you are lord of this silent land,
where the dead are your followers, transfigured souls your entourage,
for each man who dies becomes an Osiris, becomes a part of you
— Now it's good that I've come here, Osiris, good for you and all the souls
who abide with you . . ."
(*three lines corrupt*)

"J ah3w Wsjr, jmyw h3t h3nty jmntyw,
mn n jrw.t2n, ah3 n h3prw.t2n,
ssnt-t2aw n fndw.t2n, maa n h2rw.t2n, sd2m n sd2mw.t2n,
kfjt n a2fnwt.t2n, wh2a2 n wtw.t2n,
h2tpw n.t2n tpy-ta, mw n.t2n n nprwt nt2r, ah2wt n.t2n n sh3wt.t2n.
Nn h3r baw.t2n, nn sh3d h4awt.t2n.
Wn n sbaw.t2n, ss2p n qrrwt.t2n, a2h2a2 n.t2n h2r swt.t2n!

"Jj.n.j a2a r maa h4at.j, sjp.j ss2m.j jmy dwat,
h4nnw Ta-Tnn h4nnw.j, aw-a2w jrj.sn h2pt.j;
ba.k n pt, Wsjr; h4at.k n ta, h3nty Jgrt;
nt2rw.k m-h3t.k, ah3w.k tp a2wy.k, h3pr.n twtw.k jmyw.k.
Jst2 ah3 n ah3.k, Wsjr; ah3 n ah3w.t2n jmyw h3t Wsjr . . ."
(three lines corrupt).

Hour Three



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Introduction

The great god's stay in the region of "The Shore Dwellers" at the further edge of the ocean *Wer-en-es:*

to reach it he passes a spiritual equator, leaves behind the sea of Ra and enters the Bay of Osiris, which is also 2000 miles long,

then he issues orders to the transfigured souls, the followers of Osiris here in their capital.

The name of this sun-conducting night-hour is "Ghost Cutter,"

"Grab" is the name of the gate that leads to this city he'll cross in sixty minutes.

The god will see to the needs of the spirits who serve Osiris, he'll assign them land here in this region, this hour.

Learn to recognize these mysterious spirits! the man who learns their names here above-ground

will be close to Osiris down there, and the sacred acreage he's given will receive its water.

The name of this region is "Bay of Osiris The Unique, From Whose Generosity All Offerings Come" .

The activities of the mysterious beings here depicted

truly take place, exactly as drawn, in hell itself;

from its shallows to its most hidden depths it is precisely like this.

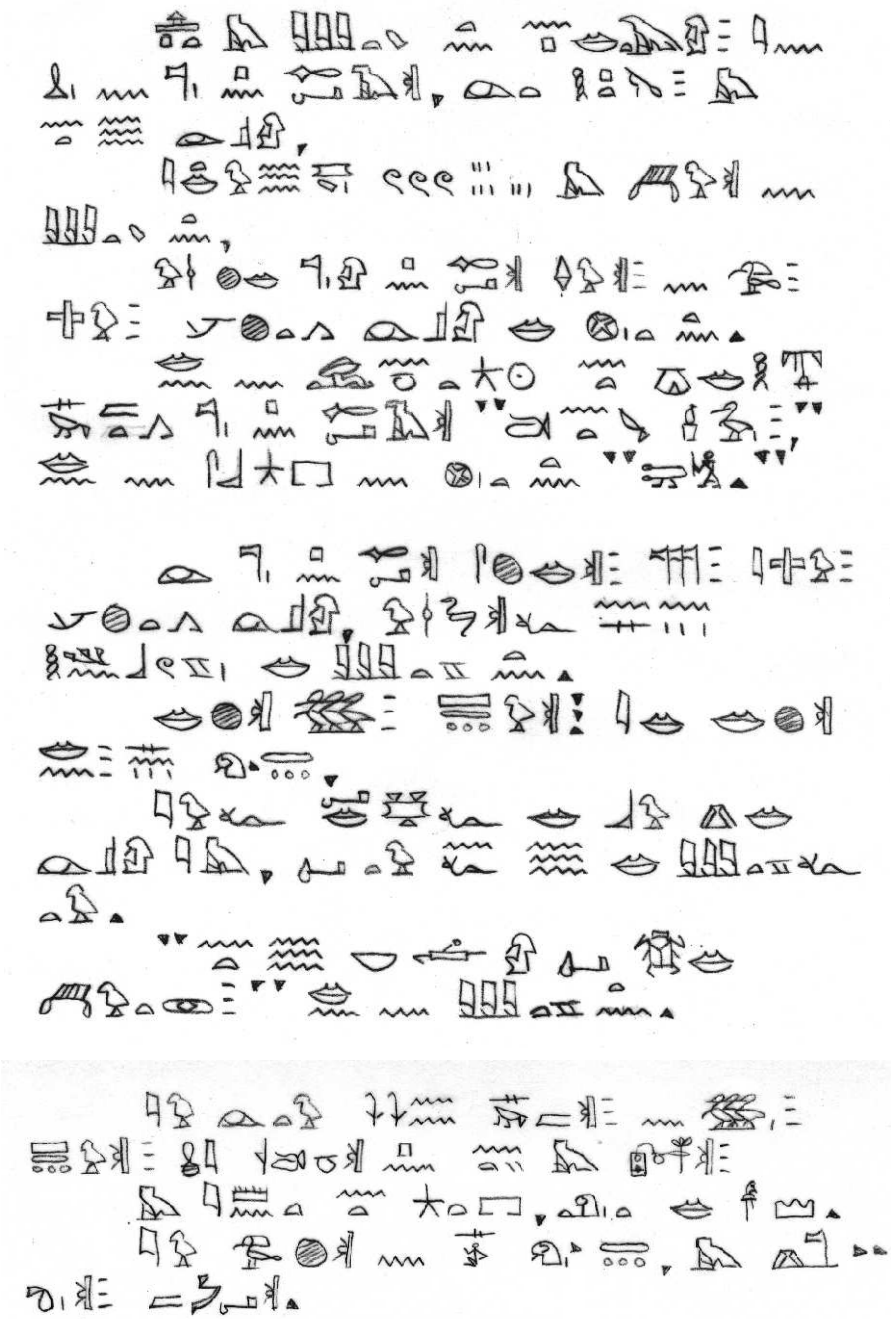
This knowledge is advantageous above ground as well as beyond the grave. It really, really works.

H2pt m sh3t nprtyw jn h2m n nt2r pn a2a, jrjt h2pwt m nt Wsjr,
(jtrw h3mt s2t psd2 m aw n sht tn,)
wd2.h3r nt2r pn a2a mdw n ah3w jmyw-h3t Wsjr r njwt tn.
Rn n wnwt nt grh2 ss2mt nt2r pn a2a: "Dnt Baw," rn n sba n njwt tn "Jt2j."

Jrj nt2r pn a2a sh3rw nt2rw jmyw h3t Wsjr, wd2.f n.sn h2nb r sh3t tn.
Rh3 baw s2taw! Jr rh3 rnw.sn tp-ta,
jw.f a2r.f r bw h4r Wsjr jm, dj.tw n.f mw r sh3t.f tn {tw}.
"Nt Nb Wa2 Dj H3pr Awt" rn n sh3t tn.

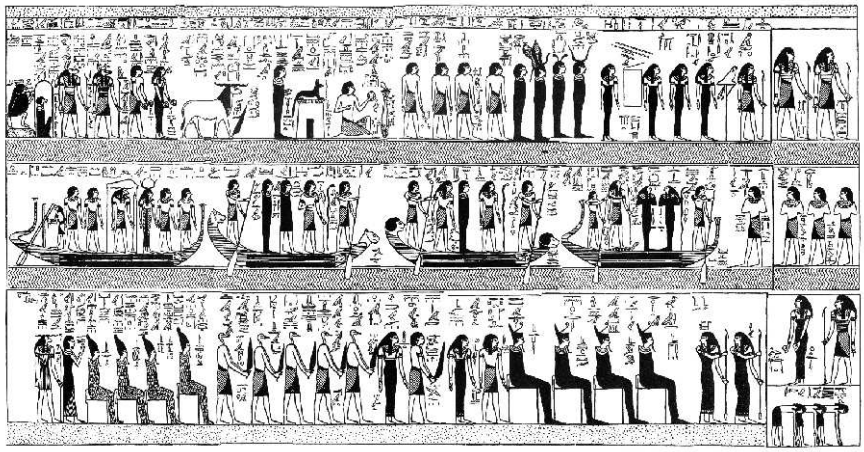
Jw jrj.tw nn ss2mw n(w) baw s2taw my qd pn nty m ss2
m jmnt n(t) dwat, h2at {ss2} r jmnt{tyw}.
Jw ah3 n s tp-ta, m h4rt-ntr — ss2rw ma2a.

Hour Three



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Complete Image of the Hour



Middle Register

Sun Boat:

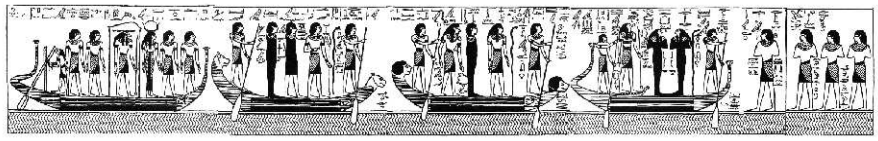
Wep-Wawet, Sia, Mistress of the Boat, Flesh, Horus the Embalmer, Soul of Truth, Wide Awake, Hu, Steersman.

The sun's barque with the same crew as in the first two hours (see either of these for fuller description). The use of two figures to represent four behind the shrine, and the transfer of the falcon head to the steersman, are probably not significant. The reappearance of the *Wedjat* on the prow suggests that Ra's eyes have adjusted to the darkness.

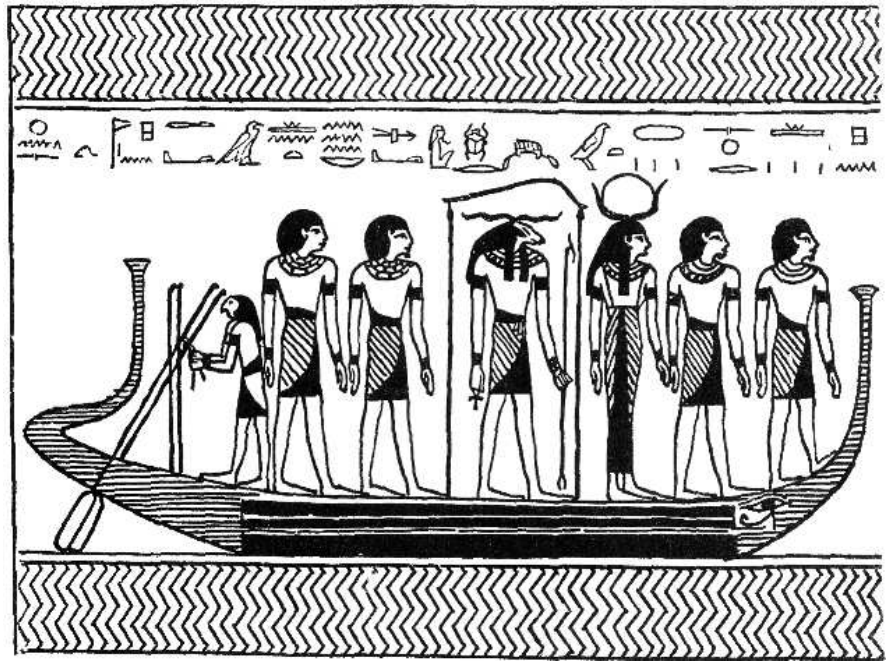
Wpj Wawt, Sja, Nbt Wja, Jwf, H2r H2knw, Ka Maa2t, Nhs, H3rp Wja.

Hour Three

Middle Register



Sun Boat



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Floating Bier

Made of Wood: Boatman, Spits Fire with his Eyes, Ruler, Noble and Long Horned, Buried, Boatman.

A "group portrait" of dead Ra, bringing together aspects of his condition and circumstances.

"Made of Wood" is the name of the boat. A carved lion's head and lion's tail were standard ornaments for the head and foot of a funeral bier. The two lion's heads on the boat make this allusion, and also define the boat itself as a living divinity.

After the first "boatman" comes the serpent "Spits Fire with his Eyes," who provides both light and protection to Ra. This, like the serpents that stand upright at the prows of the succeeding boats, is probably inspired by the lines in the poem of this hour

> for that rare and unexampled creature, the uraeus-snake,
> rises to protect you at your ship's bow

There follow three figures who represent Ra himself. First is "Ruler", who holds a *was* ("power") scepter. Second is "Noble and Long Horned," Ra still wearing the ram horns that mark him as the *ba*, the free-ranging ghost, of Osiris. In this depiction he is more human (no ram's head) and more mummiform (no visible arms) than in the boats of the first two hours.

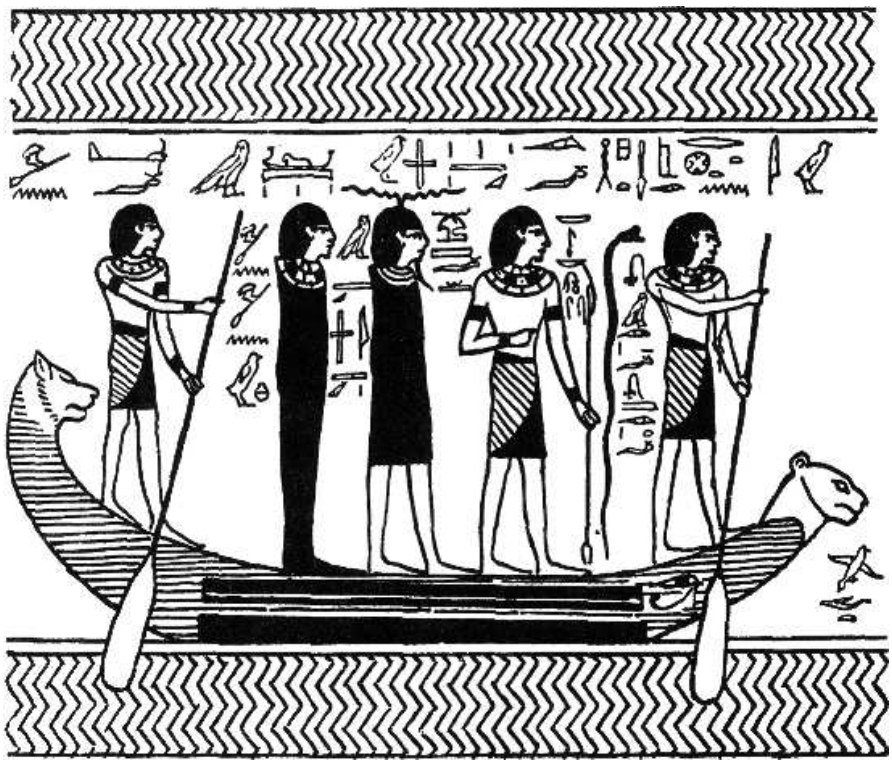
Finally we have "Buried," who stands for Ra fully identified with Osiris, followed by the second boatman.

Pa H3t: anon.,[1] *Stj m Jrt.f, Nb Was, Sfj, Jmy Ta, H4njw.*

[1] We can assume that this rower bears the same unambitious title as his fellow in the stern.

Hour Three

Floating Bier



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Dawn Boat

Baboon Boat: Tireless, Sprays Flame, *anon., anon.,* Shining Anew, Flint Face.

"Baboon Boat," with its simian heads at prow and stern, recalls hour one, when baboons greeted sunset as an inverted dawn. We are still only at the start of the journey.

The two oarsmen, "Tireless" in the prow and "Flint Face" in the stern, suggest by their names the implacable nature of Ra's metamorphosis.

Here too the boat's passengers are led by a serpent giving light and protection, "Sprays Flame."

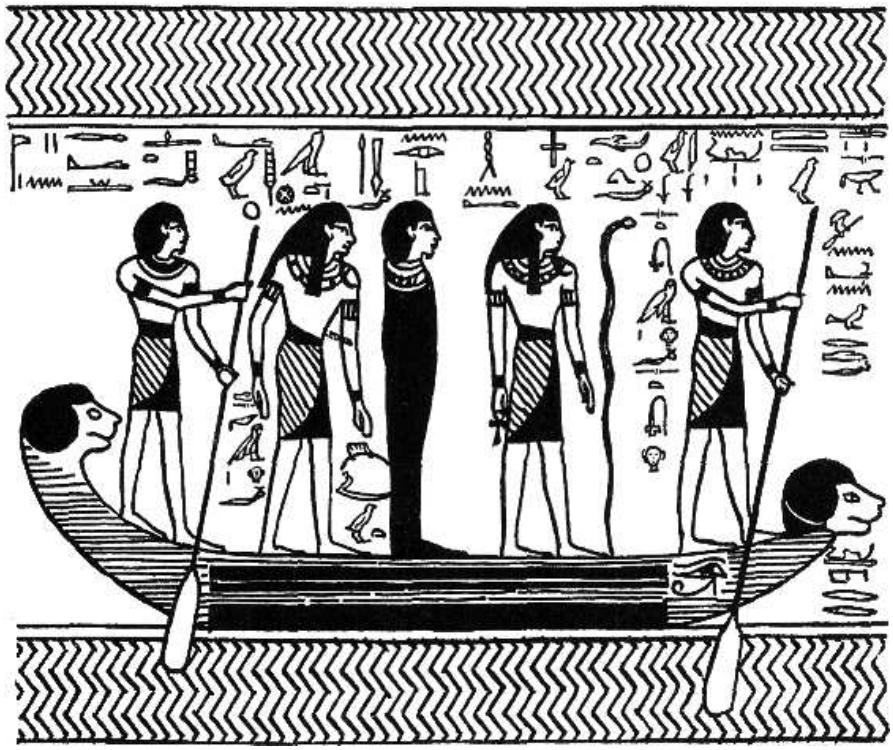
The first passenger in the boat holds an *ank*, the symbol of life. Though this figure and the one behind it are unnamed, I suggest they represent Ra (the figure with the *ank*) bringing life to Osiris (the mummified figure). This leads to Ra's own renewal, indicated by the last figure, "Shines Anew" who bows in reverence to Osiris.

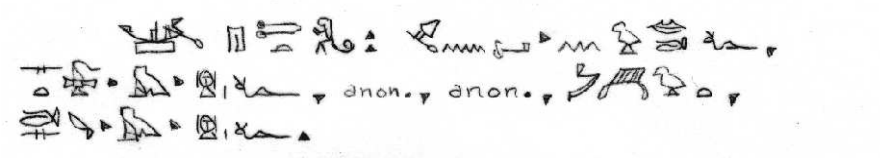
Wja Ht2t: H4nj n.Wrd.f, Stj m H2r.f, anon., anon., Mawt,[1] *Ds m H2r.f.*

[1] The word means both "newness" and "brightness."

Hour Three

Dawn Boat





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Midnight Boat

The Boat Fully Manned: *anon.,* Flame Face, Falcon, Falcon, Location Which Accompanies Horus.

While the first rower has no name, the one in the stern is labeled "Sees Port," and we may take that latter's name as descriptive of both: this boat completes the series and indeed, Ra's journey on *Wer-en-es*.

After the first rower comes a light and protection snake named "Flame Face," then we find two Horus-headed mummies, both named "Falcon." This alludes to the coming midnight moment when Ra and Osiris look upon each other and recognize their perfect identity.

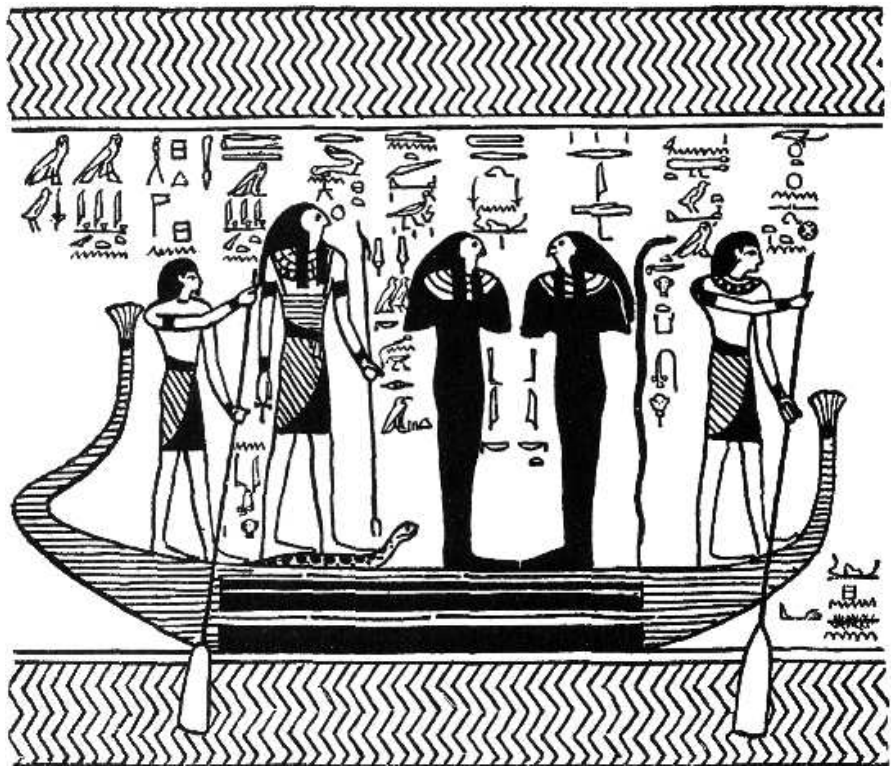
The last figure is Ra at full strength: he holds the power scepter and has his normal, unmummified form. He stands on a snake named "Location Which Accompanies Horus (i.e., reborn Ra.)" This is the serpent of night or time, another version of the crocodile from the middle register of hour two. This image looks ahead to where Ra will emerge from it and "ride" the hours as they hasten towards dawn.

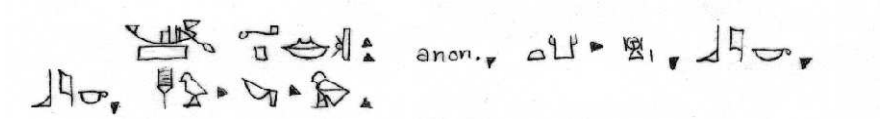
Wja A2pr(w): anon., Tka(w) H2r, Bjk{t}, Bjk{t}, A2h2a2w Ss2mw H2r.[1]

[1] Best reading of a wildly variant text.

Hour Three

Midnight Boat





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Dock Crew

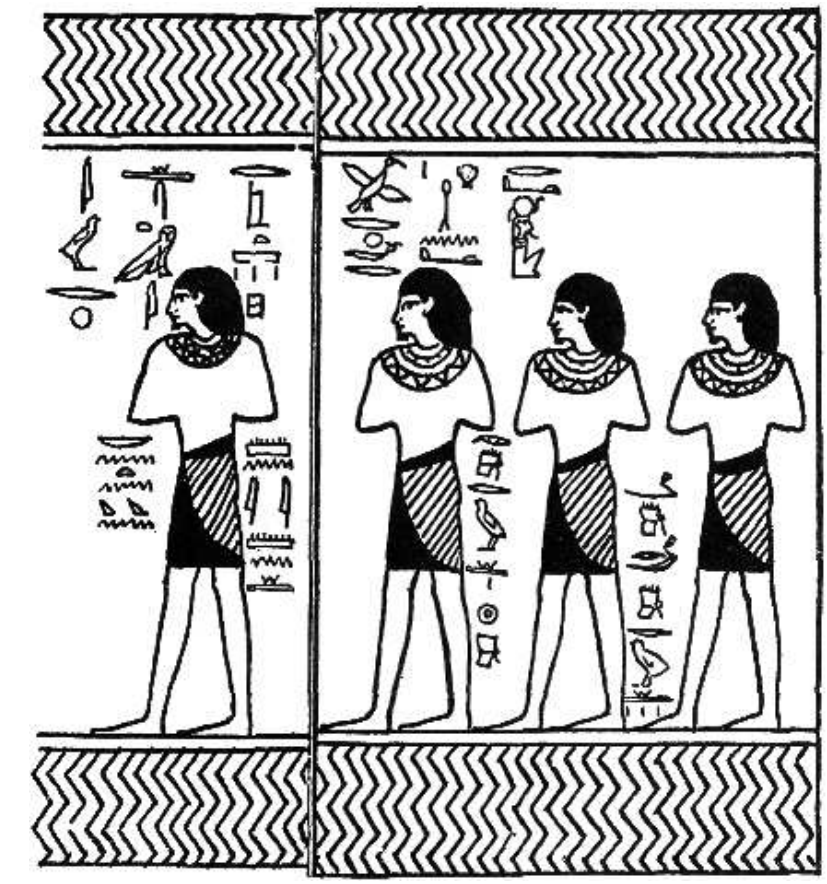
Lord of the Sea, Brings to Port, Sees the Border, Establishes the Border.

The last group consists of four figures with folded and apparently mummy-wrapped arms, who face "backwards" (to us, forwards,) away from Ra's convoy. Thus we must read them from left to right. They are a dock crew who see Ra out of the present hour and close it off behind him.

Nb Nt, Mny (r) Ta, Jrj D2rw, Maa D2rw.

Hour Three

Dock Crew



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Text in the Middle Register

This is how the great god crosses the sea named "Osiris the Unique Who is Food Itself:"

he'll row along in his underground boats to this hour, this temporary center of the world.

Great Ra will rest here, for an hour which is a lifetime,

he'll give instructions to Osiris and his retinue.

These you see here are the mysterious boats that convey Ra to this vast field of time,

when the great god makes his passage through the hour "Ghost Cutter."

The boats that carried him return to the beach named "Grab," the entrance to hour three,

after Ra's passed through this city sixty minutes long.

A man who knows these things will dwell among the blessed and eat the bread of offerings with Ra.

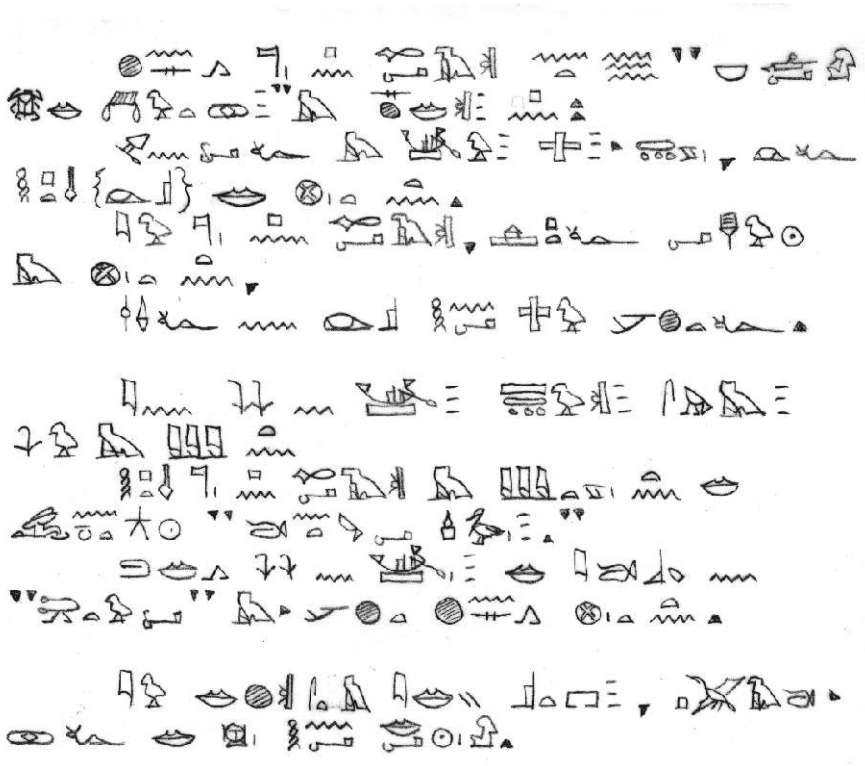
H3ns nt2r pn a2a nt "Nb Wa2 H3pr Awt" (m) sh3r pn:
h4nj.f m wjaw jmyw-ta, jrj.f-h2pt {Wsjr} r njwt tn.
Jw nt2r pn a2a, h2pt.f a2h2a2w m njwt tn,
wd2-mdw.f n Wsjr h2na2 jmyw h3t.f.

Jn nn n wjaw s2taw ss2mw sw m sh3t tn
h2pt nt2r pn a2a m sh3t tn r wnwt "Dnt Baw."
Ph4r nn n wjaw r jdb n "Jtjw" m-h3t h3ns njwt tn.

Jw rh3 st m jry swt, pad.f r h2r h2na2 Ra2.

Hour Three

Middle Register Text



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Upper Register

The Journey So Far

Enemy-Slayer, Bringer, Bringer, Joyful Voice, Anubis, (*obsc.,*) Sitting On Your Grave.

First we have Ra as a ghost (*ba*) punningly represented as a ram (*ba*), holding a great knife in his fore-hoof. He is well armed and capable of his own defense, hence the name "Enemy-Slayer."

Following him are a female and a male worshipper, both labeled "Bringer," carrying a pair of eye-irises. This is a visual quotation from the previous hour's poem:

> I travel by the light of the sun or the moon
> for they are my eyes; wherever they shine, I go.

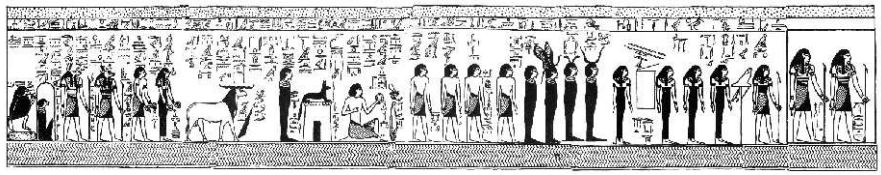
Next come two deities carrying *anks* and *was* (power) scepters. The first, "Joyful Voice." has a crocodile head (Budge's version incorrectly gives him a jackal head), recalling the crocodile-headed deities who greeted Ra in the first hour when his boat set out on the waters. The second of the gods is Anubis, who here makes his first appearance. As god of embalming he ushers Ra into the post-mortem condition.

Finally we have two baboons, recalling those whose dawn-cries welcomed Ra's underground rising in hour one. The first baboon (name obsc.), mummified, sits in a shrine-like coffin. Behind him "Sitting-On-Your-Grave" squats on a sand-filled oval which represents the graveyard.

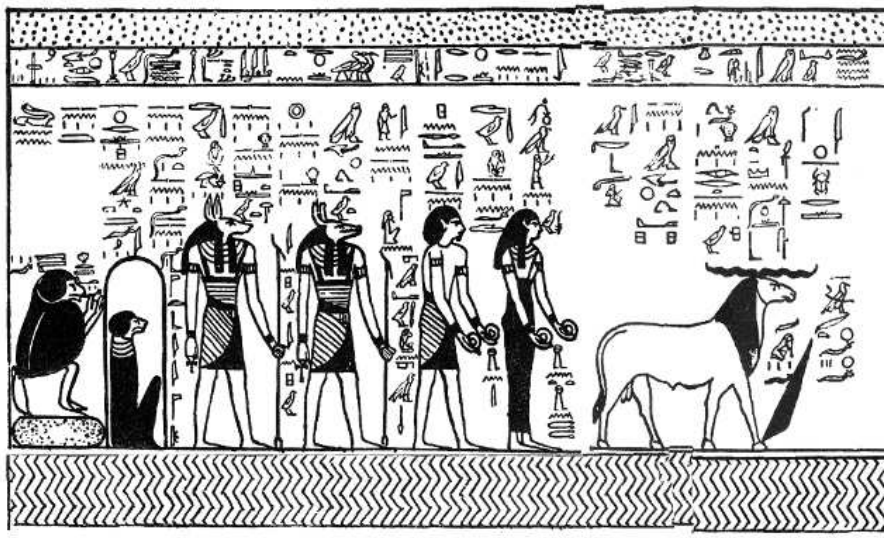
Sma H3ftyw, Jnjtt Jnjty, Nhm-H3rw, Jnpw, {Dby,} H2r S2a2j.

Hour Three

Upper Register



The Journey So Far



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Waking the Dead

Great Magician, Brings the Iris and Calms the Gods, Powerful Anubis, Stands and Stretches.

The first figure, "Great Magician," shows the determinative for "flesh" (looks like an inverted water-drop) atop a fan (which has been misrepresented in this version as a papyrus column). The "flesh" determinative stands for the dead Ra, while the fan is frequently used as a symbol of breath and life. The act of Ra the "Great Magician" is to bring about his own resurrection.

Next we have a worshipper, "Brings the Iris and Calms the Gods," offering the iris of the solar eye, the *Wedjat*, to Ra: this also indicates a restoration of life and power.

"Powerful Anubis" is represented as a jackal lying atop a mausoleum. Here as in the proceeding group he indicates that death now has power over Ra. The final figure, "Stands and Stretches," a mummy struggling loose from its bandages and already extending its hands, suggests Ra's revival.

Wr H2kaw, Jnj D2fd2 Sh2tp Nt2rw, Jnpw n Was, Pd2 A2h2a2.

Hour Three

Waking the Dead

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Canopic Figures

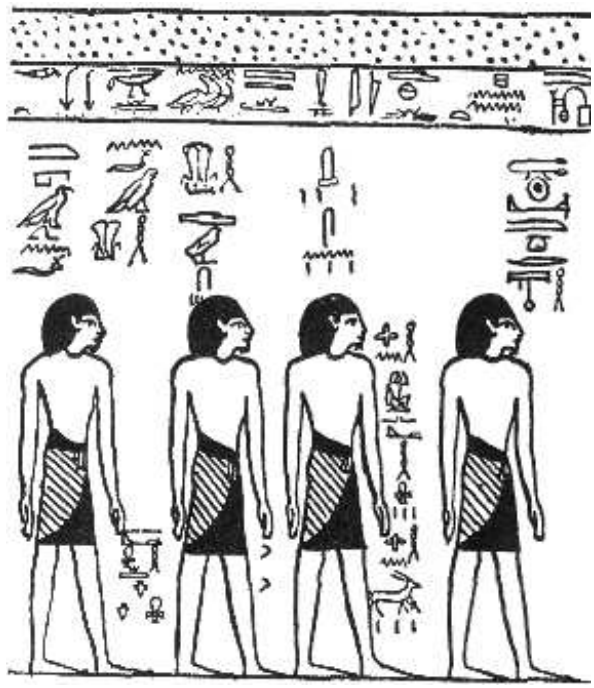
Carries to the Dark Grave, Mummy Made Young, Bodily Strength, Mummy Heart.

Four figures without attributes, who represent the "sons of Horus," the canopic jars, which hold the mummified internal organs. The oblique, euphemistic representation of the facts of embalming is typical.

Jt2j m Grh2, H2wn Sa2h2, T2ma, Sa2h2 Jb.

Hour Three

Canopic Figures



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

The Mummy

That Soul, Bull-Strong Shape, Stolen, Exchange.

The head-ornaments of these four figures have undergone a great deal of distortion: comparison with other examples in the Valley of the Kings shows that the second originally had steer-horns exactly like the first. The third figure is often shown with three short curving lines on his head, very likely meant for a uraeus, which were finally re-interpreted as the body and pinions of the winged serpent we see here.

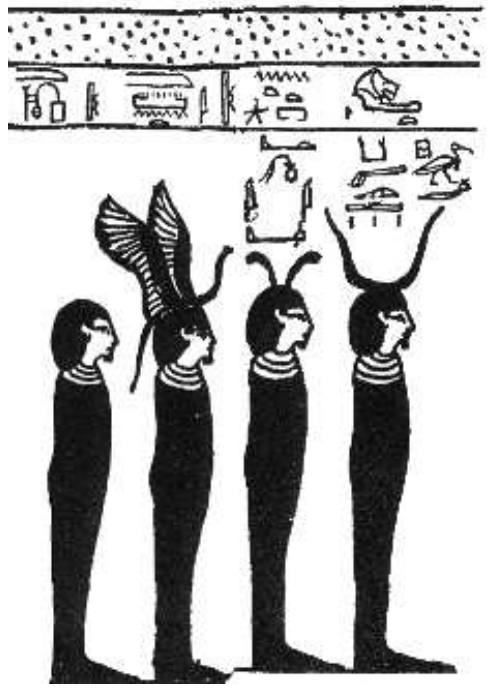
These four figures represent aspects of the mummy. The mummy is the very image of "That Soul" to which it belongs, and is a "Bull-Strong Shape," that is, an everlasting preservation of the physical form, and so a bastion of the personality. The bull-horns on the first two figures suggest strength.

The third figure with its uraeus crown represents the Ra's earthly power which has been "Stolen" from him by death. An "Exchange" of state has now been made, and the celestial king been reduced to a mummy.

Ba Pf, Ka Jrw, A2way, D2baw.

Hour Three

The Mummy



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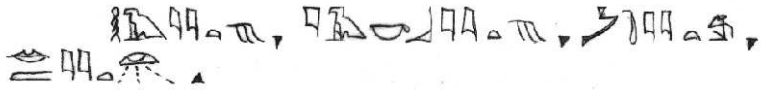
Mourners

Keener, Mourner, Griever, Weeper

H2ajt, Jakbjt, Mat2ryt, Rmjt.

Hour Three

Mourners



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Horus

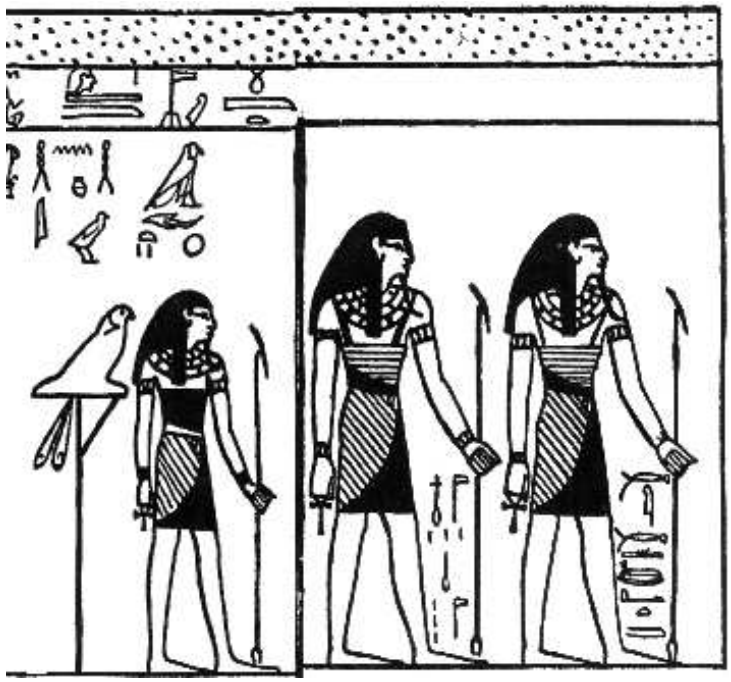
His Name is Revered in the Land of the Dead, Sets the World Back in Balance, Perfection of the Gods, (*obsc.*).

Horus is shown in four aspects: three gods with power-scepters followed by a falcon on a standard.

Rn.f D2sr{t} m Jmnt, Mh2 Maa2t, Nfrw Nt2rw, {H2r H3tyw}.

Hour Three

Horus



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Text in Upper Register

This is the manner of their existence in hell with their real, actual, physical mummified corpses.

The great god summons them: then their *bas*, their souls, perch upon their mummies,

human-headed birds, chirping and shrieking,

and along with them come their Shadows, which are the immaterial bodies of souls;

Ba and Shadow, they shrill to great Ra when he calls; they adore him, they weep when he's passed beyond.

This is their work in the world of the dead:

to crush the snake Apophis so the floodwaters of the Nile can rise,

so Nun (god of the primeval waters) moves, and Hapy (the Nile), runs high.

These *bas* and Shadows howl and the sound of it beats back Apophis

their screams echo through hell's great cavern to become the storm winds of Seth

that thunder out of their underground caves far out on earth's deserty edge

thence to become the weather of foreign nations who depend on clouds to irrigate their fields.

But in Egypt, the sound is only to scare back Apophis so Osiris is safe and the Nile can rise.

Whoever knows these passes safely by, he expects and understands the terrible screaming of the souls

so it doesn't make him faint with fear, he doesn't fall into the trap.

Wnn.sn m sh3r pn m dwat, m jwf.sn d2s.sn,
mdwj baw.sn h2r.sn, h2tp s2wwt.sn h2r.sn m-h3t d2wy sn nt2r pn a2a.
Jw.sn mdwj.sn n.f, dwa.sn sw, jakb.sn n.f m-h3t a2pp.f h2r.sn.
Jrjt.sn pw m jmnt: nd2 sbj, sh3pr Nnw, jrjt nmtt H2a2pj.
Prr d2a2 m ta h4r.sn dj.sn h3rw, nd2.sn sbj.
Jw rh3 sn m a2pp h2r.sn, n sbj.n.f n hmhmt.sn, n haj.n.f m h2adw.sn.

Hour Three

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Lower Register:

Knum

Underground Guardian, Knum.

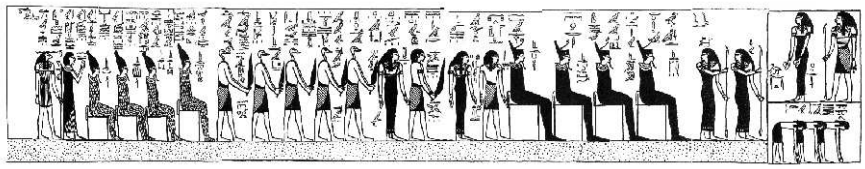
A guardian, arms raised in reverence, welcomes Ra to this Osirian region. He is followed by Knum, the ram-headed god who controls the annual Nile-rise from the underground caves of Hapy (the Nile).

The ocean *Wer-en-es* is the underground Nile that finally rises aboveground to become our Nile. Knum is very properly in control of the Bay of Osiris, which is the source of this underground Nile.

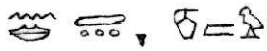
Nr Ta, H4nmw.

Hour Three

Lower Register:



Knum



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Judges

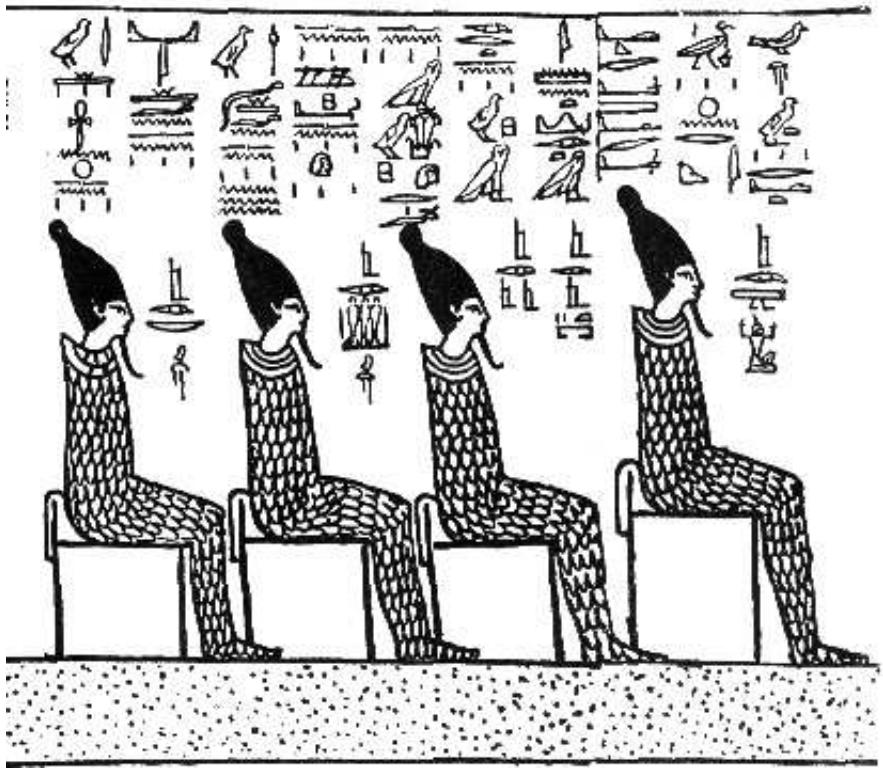
Osiris Who Takes the Countless Dead, Osiris on his Proper Throne, Osiris Foremost of the Dead, Osiris Lord of the West.

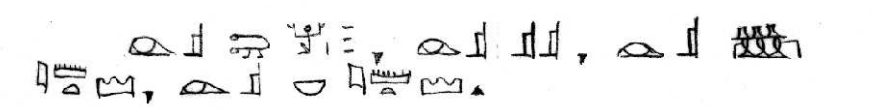
A fourfold depiction of Osiris, in the white crown of Upper Egypt, enthroned as judge of the dead. To show someone standing before the throne of Osiris is a graphic euphemism for death, like our expression "gone to meet his judge."

Wsjr Jt2j H2h2w, Wsjr Sty, Wsjr H3nty Jmntt, Wsjr Nb Jmnt.

Hour Three

Judges





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Executioners

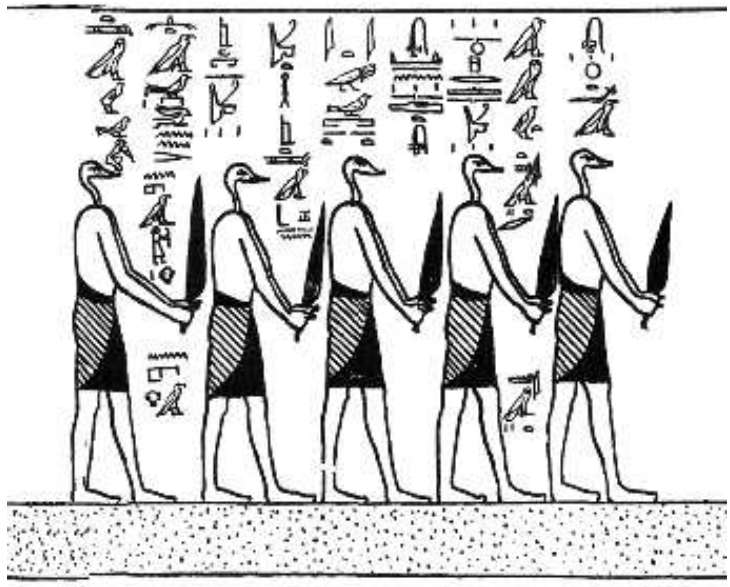
Bellower, Annihilator, *anon.,* Makes them Shudder, (*obsc.*).

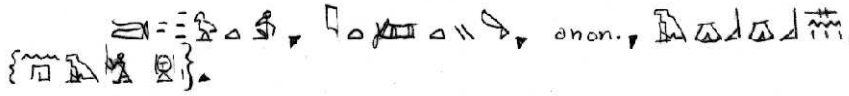
Five bird-headed punishers of the dead with knives. In several versions these have the ibis head of Thoth, and this is correct: in funerary scenes Thoth, god of mathematics, symbolizes fair and exact judgment.

Dnjwt, Jtmty, anon., Agb(gb).sn, {*Nha H2r*}.

Hour Three

Executioners





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Damnation

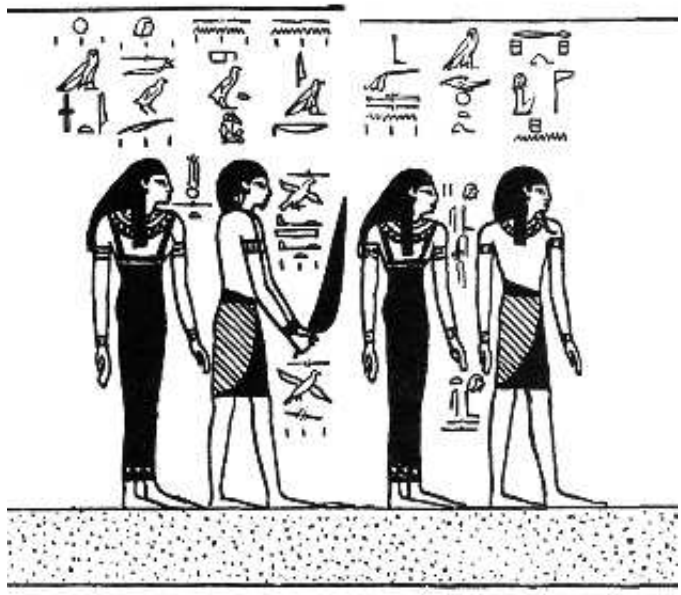
Dead and Buried, In Charge of the Flames, In Charge of Executions, Place of Rebirth.

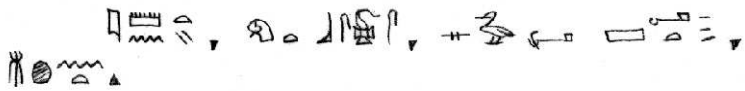
Four figures who allude in general terms to the torments of the damned, ending however on a hopeful note.

Jmnty, Tpyt Bsw.s, Saa S2a2t, Msh3nt.

Hour Three

Damnation





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Osiris

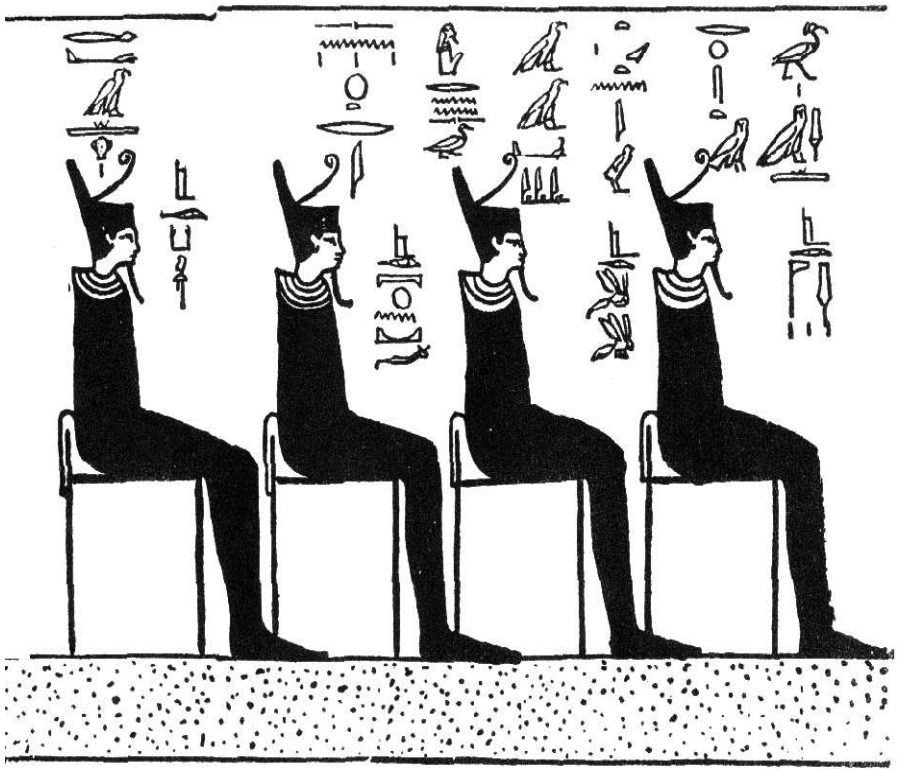
Osiris Controller of the Gods, Osiris in the Red Crown, Osiris in his Crypt, Osiris Who Makes Hell Live.

Four Osirises on judgment-thrones, wearing the red crowns of Lower Egypt.

Wsjr Sh3m Nt2rw, Wsjr Bjty, Wsjr h2ry H3nw, Wsjr Ka Jmntt.

Hour Three

Osiris



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Stars

Arisen, Orion.

These two gods with tall power-scepters, looking back. They are Sirius and Orion, the star and constellation that rise above the horizon near dawn at the time the Nile's flooding begins. The constellation we call Orion was seen by the Egyptians too as a standing figure. They identified it with the resurrected Osiris.

A2h2aw, Sah2.

Hour Three

Stars

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

New Year

(*Obsc.*), She of the Sunrise Mountain.

The final pair in the procession face backwards. The figure on our left is Hathor, who is frequently depicted as the mountains behind which the sun sets or as those from behind which it rises. As "She of the Sunrise Mountain ," Hathor holds sun-irises that represent the dawn of the new year announced by the rising of Sirius and Orion. The other, unidentifiable, figure holds the symbols for life and power.

{H3trj}, Bah4yt.

Farewell

Walks Softly, Pays Tribute, Bowing.

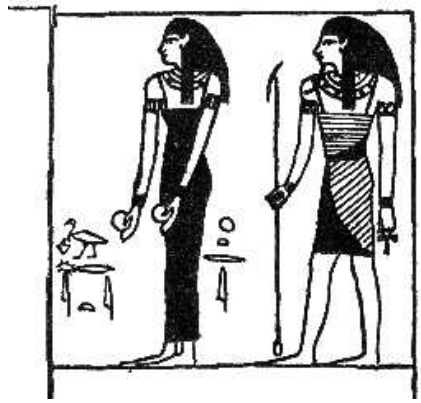
Three spirits make reverence to the departing Osirian procession.

S2ta S2m, H2faw, Jakw.[1]

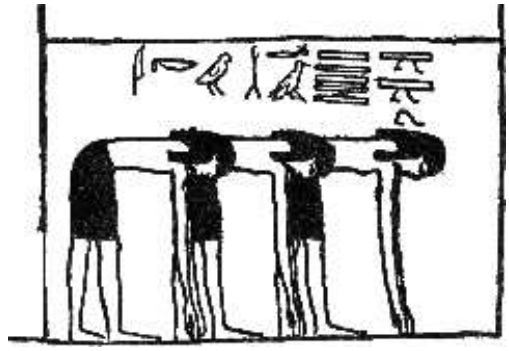
[1] From the word for "old," *jak* , which has the root-meaning of "bent over, bowed."

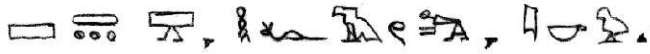
Hour Three

New Year



Farewell





Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Text in the Lower Register

This is what they look like when they adore Ra. That great god issues his orders to them.

They'll live when he calls to them, when he accords them their water,

they'll regain the power to see, hear and speak because of his commands.

This is their activity in the western lands, the world of the dead:

they'll slice up *Bas* of the wicked and cook them on spits, they'll lock away their Shadows too;

sinners are doomed to swift extinction: they'll set those soon-to-be-nonentities in the place of annihilation.

They'll kindle a fire, they'll make a cremation of Ra's enemies. Their flint knives provide the spark to start it.

They'll wail, they'll mourn, after Ra's passed them.

(*Obsc.*) is the name of this field's guardian. Whoever knows this

will be a ghost with the power to pass that watcher safely and travel unhindered.

Wnn.sn m sh3r pn dwa.sn nt2r pn a2a. Jw nt2r pn a2a wd2.f n.sn mdw.

A2nh3.sn d2wj.f n sn, wd2.f n.sn mw; s2sp.sn tpw.sn m wd2 tp-r.f.

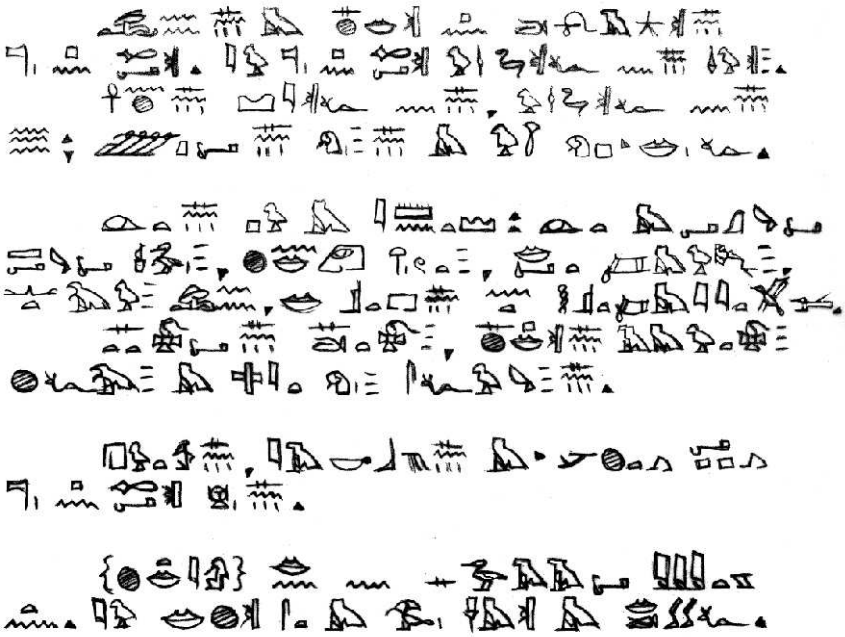
Jrjt.sn pw m jmnt: jrjt ma2q s2a2 baw, h3nr swt, rdjt tmw, jwtyw wnn, r st.sn nt h2tmyt.

Stt.sn sd2t, sh3pr.sn amwt h3ftyw m jmyt tpw sfw.sn.

Hwt.sn, jakb.sn m-h3t a2pp nt2r pn a2a h2r sn.

{H3trj} rn saa sh3t tn. Jw rh3 st m ba sh3m m rdwy.fy.

Hour Three



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Post Script

The great god moors his ship by them,
(*line obsc.*).

This is an accurate depiction of how it happens in Hell.
The man who knows these things becomes, after death, an *Ak,* a transfigured soul,
independent, free-moving, not like the damned —
the man who knows these things emerges from his tomb by day
in spiritual form to breathe the sunlit air, a *Ba*.

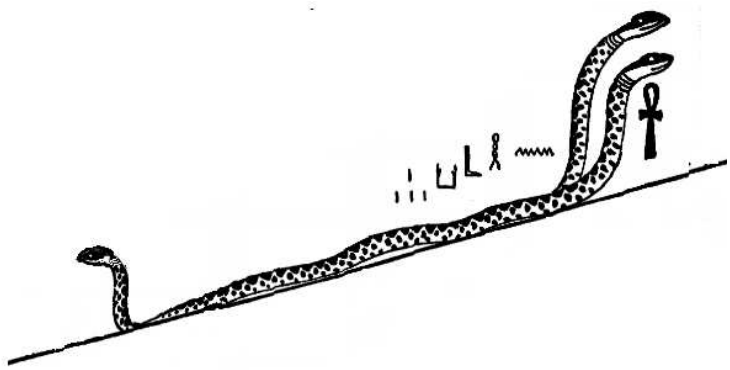
The third hour, which leads through this region, is named "Ghost Cutter."

Jw nt2r pn a2a mnj.f r.sn, {*dwj.h3r.f n a2wy wja.f m-h3t wd2.f n.sn mdw.*}

Jw jrj.tw mjtt m jmnt nt dwat.
Jw rh2 nn m ah3 sh3m m rdwy.f(y) jwty a2q.f m h2tmyw.
Jw.f prj.f m jrw m hrw, tpj.f t2aw r wnwt.f.
Wnwt ss2mt r sh3t tn "Dnt Baw."

Hour Three

Hour Four:



Realm of the Ka

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

This hour lacks the poetic dialogue that characterizes the other hours because we are here in the kingdom of Sokar, Lord of Death's Silence. The sparse clarifying texts that are given are largely in "enigmatic writing": this is deliberate misspelling or partial writing of words, sometimes writing them backwards or upside down. Here we enter on the great mystery itself, knowledge so valuable and powerful it can only be given in code.

Budge reproduces the illustrations for the tomb of Sety I, which represent the hour on the wall of a ramped, downward sloping corridor: this is a deliberate echo of the abrupt downward slide into the tomb the text and illustrations depict.

All figures here are facing in the proper direction: as we enter into the realm of Sokar, the looking-glass world reversal that has so far characterized the world of the dead is itself reversed: this turn-around signifies that the grave is also the place of renewed life, where death itself is reversed.

But there is a further refinement: the logic of the procession, the way its themes are unfolded and developed, dictates that we must read it in reverse, from bottom left to top right!

A final matter to note: Ra's identification with Horus is here receiving clearer and more consistent expression, both in the writing and the pictures. The two names are now interchangeable.

Introduction

A pause in towing the great god's barque
here in the hidden graveyard cave that holds the mummy's holy form,
a pause in this hour, this the final slide into the tomb.

Ra sees to the needs of the dead here, operating by sound alone: he can see nothing now.

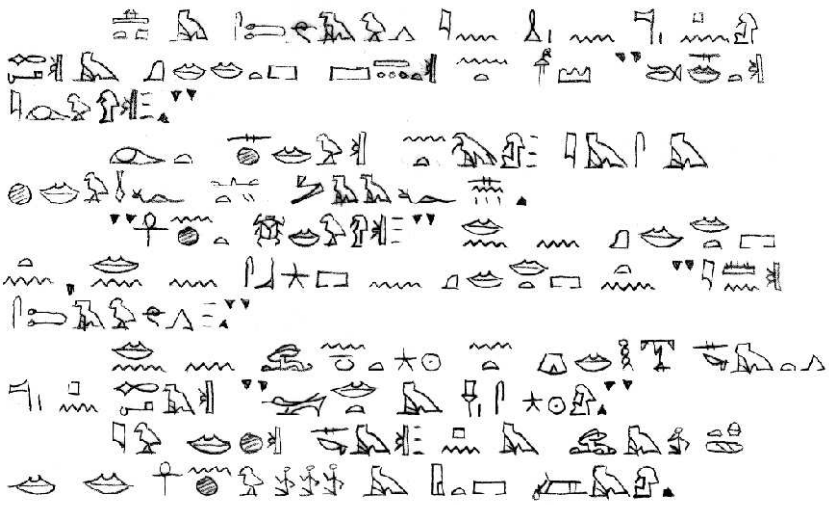
This cave is the grave itself, it's name is "Living Chrysalis."

The name of this cave's gate is "Coffin Dragged Of Sight."

The hour of night that leads Ra now is called "She's Very Strong."

Those who know what happens here become, after death, *Bas*
. They eat the bread of funeral offerings
beside the souls that dwell with the sun god in his temple.

Hour Four



H2tp m st2aw jn h2m n nt2r pn a2a m qrrt s2tat nt jmnt "D2srt Jrw."
Jrjt sh3rw ntyw jm.s m h3rw.f jwty maa.f sn.[1]
"Anh3t H3prw" rn n qrrt tn, rn n sba n qrrt tn "Jmn St2aw."
Rn n wnwt nt grh2 ss2mt nt2r pn a2a "Wrt m Sh3m.s."
Jw rh3 ss2m pn m wnm t r r anh3w[2] *m h2wt Jtm.*[3]

[1] Lit. "by means of his voice, (the voice of him) who does not see them." A bit awkward, but quite intelligible. We shall have to make allowances for the enigmatic style.

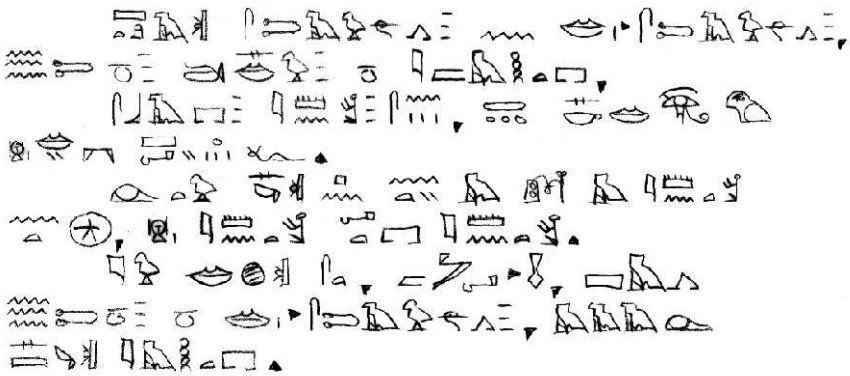
[2] Euphemism.

[3] The following lines, and many other places in this section, are given in enigmatic writing. I have normalized this where the reading is very difficult.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Secret are the paths down the mouth of the grave,
the occult roads and hidden gateways to Deadlock;
secret, the land of Sokar, the land of Osiris the Dead,
Sokar whose throne is a grave-mound!
This visual and written image shows things as they will actually occur
in the hidden depths of Hell, its mystery of mysteries.
Those who know this are rightly guided, they're free to pass *Rosetau*, Gravesmouth,
to gaze upon the face of *Jembet*, the face of Deadlock.

Hour Four



S2taw nw R-*St2aw,*[1] *mt2nw dsrw n Jmh2t,* [2]
sbaw jmnw.sn, ta Skr h2ry sa2j.f.
Jrj.tw ss2m pn nty m ss2 m jmn(t) nt dwat h2r jmnt a2t jmnt.
Jw rh3 st, maa2-h3rw, s2m mt2nw R-*St2aw, maa ss2m Jmh2t.*

[1] R-*St2aw*, or R*osetau* as it is usually written out, means literally "the entrance of dragging," *i.e.*, the mouth of the tomb.

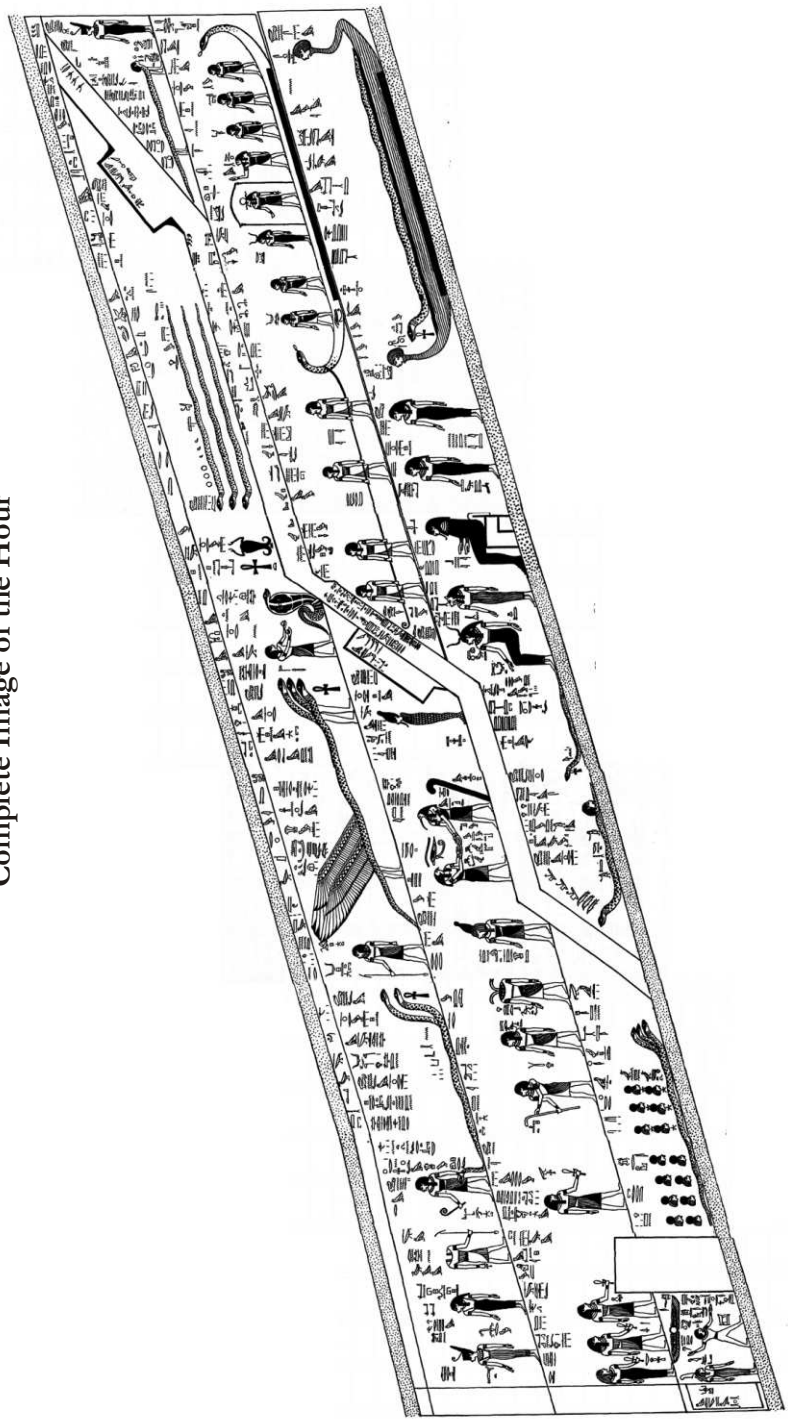
The wheel never really "caught on" in Egypt. Though the Hyksos introduced the chariot in the seventeenth century B.C., its use was confined to the aristocracy, who could afford such sporty and expensive vehicles. The sledge remained the hauler of choice, because of the basic conservatism of the Egyptians, the dominance of Nile boating for all carrying, and because such axeled vehicles as the ancient world could build were not adequate for the heavy stone hauling the Egyptians engaged in.

Thus, in the unwheeled world of Egypt, coffins were always dragged on sledges to the grave, giving us the euphemism "entrance of dragging," — the entrance of the grave to which the coffin is dragged.

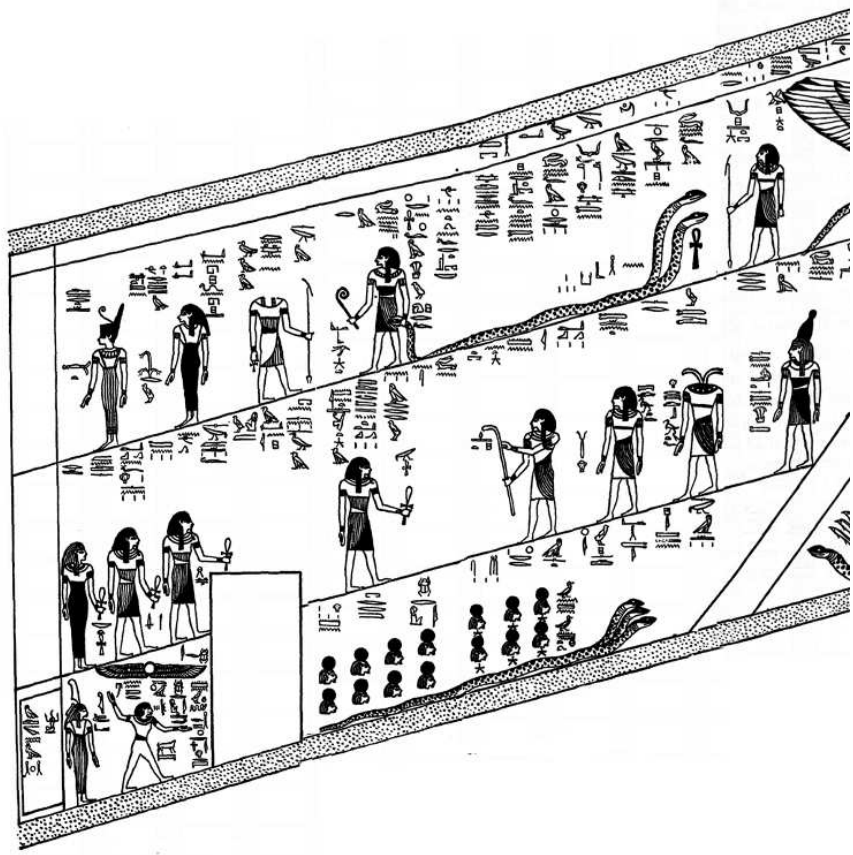
[2] My translation of *Jmh2t* requires some explanation. The root of the word, *jmh2,* means "to breastfeed," and the term was originally used for an underground source of the Nile. It became a popular name for cemeteries, and in this context one might translate it "Spring of Renewal." Eventually it was used as a general term for the underworld.

In the present book the spelling has been significantly changed. Ordinarily the word has an extra "m," clearly added for sense rather than sound. This second "m" is the flat, abstracted image of the primaeval mound, which reinforces the idea of renewal and rebirth. But in our text both "m"s have been replaced by the arm which is an abbreviated writing of *mj*, the imperative of "to give. There is however no sense of giving. The *h2* remains a braided lamp-wick, and the final *t* is represented by a rope hobble. The image created by the arm and the two cords before is one of restraint and constriction. Thus my rendering of the term as "Deadlock." I have however given it in the non-enigmatic spelling for ease of reading.

Complete Image of the Hour

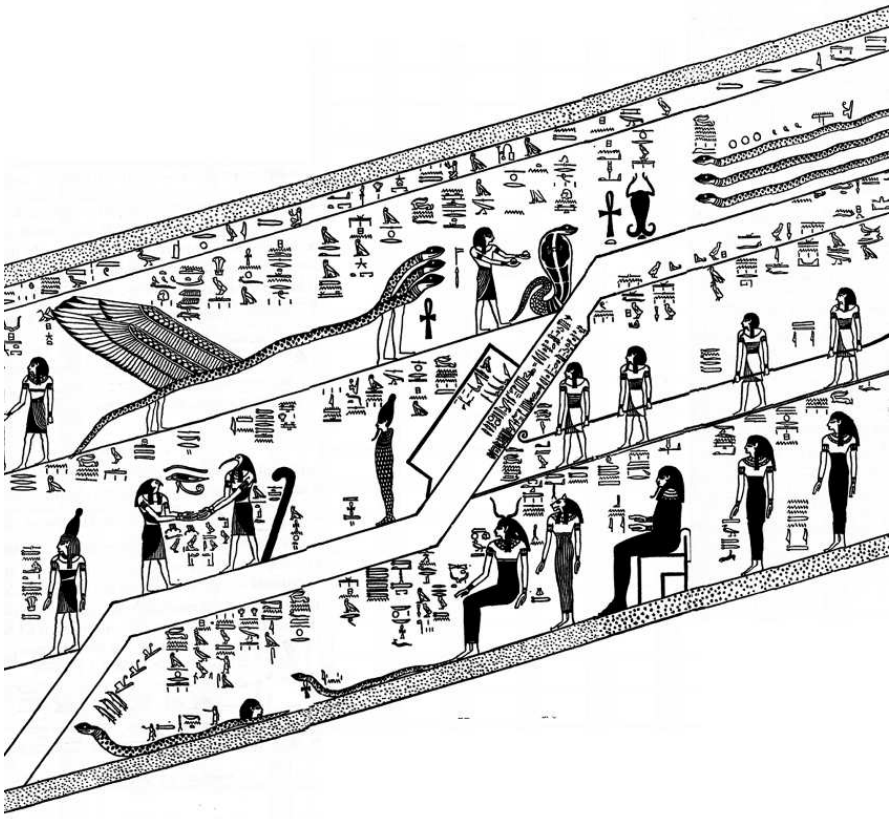


Hour Four



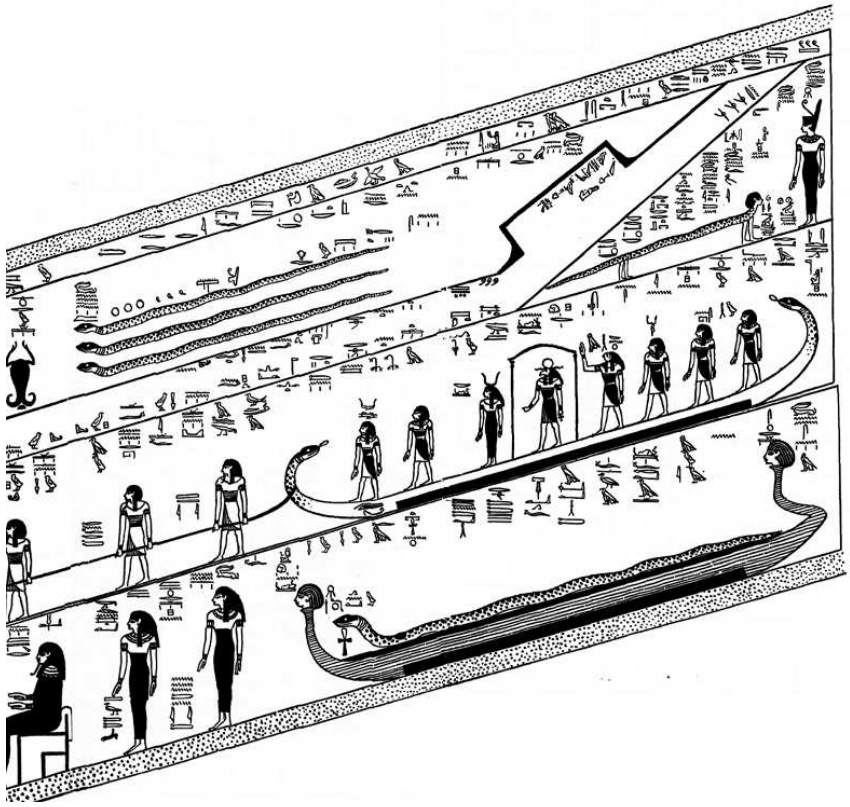
Complete Image: Left

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell



Complete Image: Center

Hour Four



Complete Image: Right

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Mid to Lower Register

Path and Final Gate

The pathway zigzagging across the registers is an overview of the course which the registers show in profile. The path is divided into five sections by its turns. The lowest two sections of the zig-zag path, one level with the middle register and one crossing the lower register, show Ra's progress from the gate in the center of the middle register, and then his descent into the lower register to the gate leading out of the hour. (The gate is the oblong to the left of the furthest left-hand figure in the lower register). The big empty oblong is not part of the design, but a door cut into the wall interrupting the picture.

Secret graveward road Anubis takes when he has to hide corpse of Ra.

Hidden road leading to the entrance of Deadlock. Matrix of Resurrection

The text translated "Matrix of Resurrection" literally reads "Oval of Corpses." The word for "oval," *newet*, originally referred to the dungball rolled by the scarab beetle, which became a poetic metaphor for the sun in its course. *Newet* can also signify a place in the underworld where resurrection takes place; a further meaning is "covering or sarcophagus of Osiris."

As if this were an insufficient richness of layered meanings, it is also potentially a pun, and could be read as the plural of *net*, "flood." The "new life" associations of water, from the ocean to the amniotic fluid, are well known.

The word "corpses" appended to *newet* makes it clear that a resurrection is meant. The translation given here is perhaps adequate to the context, but the full range of meanings — solar cycle, resurrection, coffin of Osiris and floodwaters of renewal— will come into play in the next hour, where the Matrix of Resurrection is the centerpiece of the whole divine drama.

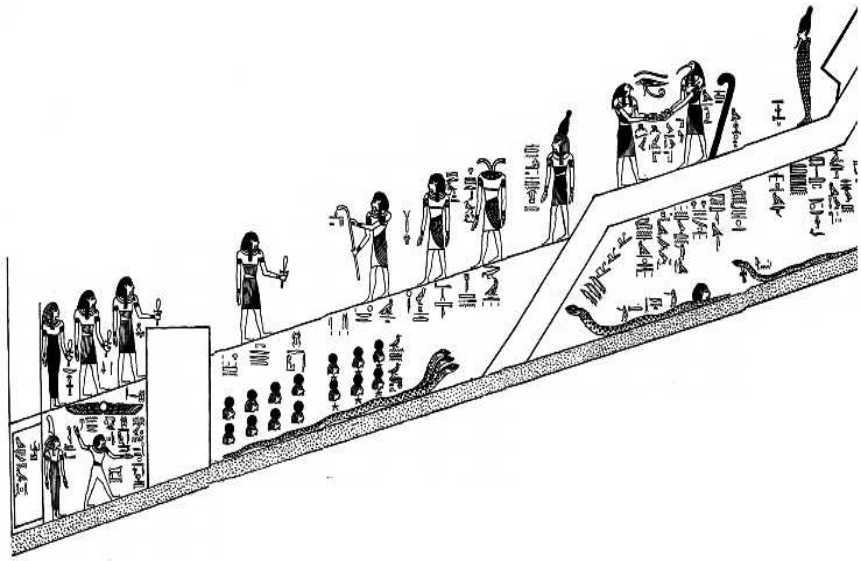
The path ends with a gateway, which is inscribed:

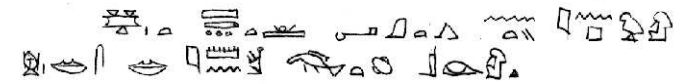
Eternal Cut-Off.

As the name of the gate suggests, the passage through this point is decisive.

Hour Four

Path and Final Gate





Wat s2tat a2qt n(ty) Jnpw h2r.s r jmn h2at Wsjr.
Wat s2tat n r Jmh2t; Nwt H4awt.
Mds n Nh2h2.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Lunar Sequence

(right to left)

Alterer

The serpent named Alterer is an occult depiction of Deadlock itself, and it is he who leads to Deadlock. There's a light that shines within him every day until Kepri's birth: the light of the renewing moon. Alterer is Time, and his many heads, his many faces, are days. Kepri manifests himself through these, he appears in the changing face of the Alterer, then he moves on.

The three-headed serpent "Alterer" stands at the entrance to the next hour. He represents time itself, and his three heads stand for his divisibility into units which nonetheless form a continuous whole.

He has above his back 14 heads. Each one should have a sun-disk above it and a star below it. The sun and star determinatives signify time (*e.g.*, they appear in the word for time, *new*.) The heads themselves are the word *tep*, which in time expressions (like *hebew en tep terew*, "Festival of the New Year," or *tep at*, "the right moment,") suggest returning, renewing, suitable or correct time.

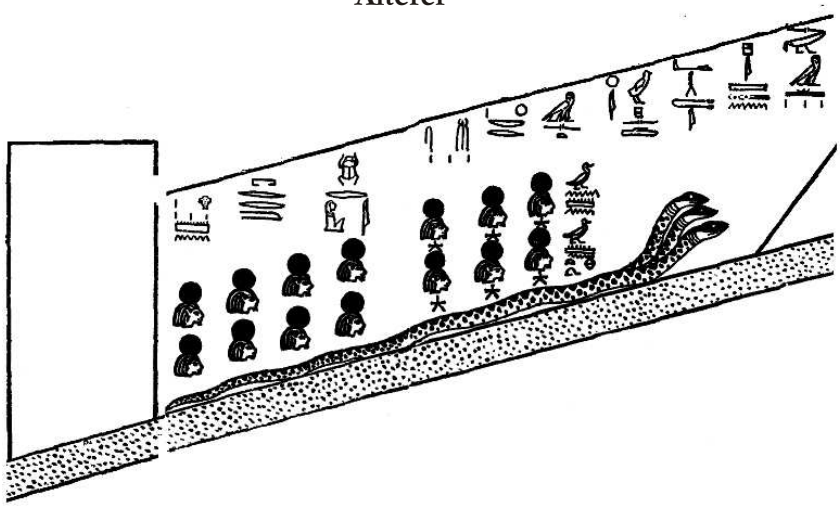
These fourteen celestial heads represent the fourteen days of the waxing moon. The Egyptians honored the first day of the lunar month as the moon's rebirth, the sixth as the "Filling Out of the Moon's Eye (*Wedjat*)," and the fourteenth as the moon's (and Osiris') victory over the forces of darkness. The days are shown riding on the back of the serpent because they are a part of him.

Kepri's manifestation is explained below.

The blank oblong behind "Alterer" is not part of the picture, but a door cut into the wall on which the hour was painted.

Hour Four

Alterer



Mnmnw. Ss2mw p(w){y} s2ta n Jmh2t.[1] *Jw psd jm.s ra2 nb r msjt H3prj prr m h2rw Mnmnw, h2rj.h3r H3prj.*

1 The ambiguity of ss2mw n, which could be read both as "who leads to" and "image of" is reproduced in the translation.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Kepri and Maat

Kepri pauses here, a winged disk, the sun of night, a soaring god with splendid feathers, a great eye opening in the face of the sky. This is true, just and right.

Kepri, who is typically associated with the dawning sun, is shown here in the form of a sun-disk, though in this context the renewed lunar disk is meant. The figure below him, in the pose of a conquering king (typically this stance would call for a spear or club in the raised hand) is a hypostasis of the lunar disk who has conquered darkness. Maat, the feather-crowned goddess on the left, shows that justice has here been served

Kepri's complex role in the resurrection of the dead sun will be fully treated in the next hour: one should bear in mind that the root meaning of the name is the verb *keper*, "to become."

Hour Four

Kepri and Maat

H3prj h2tp.f m smh3.f n nt2r sab-s2wt jmy h2rt pt. Maa2t.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Ra's Procession, Part One: Lower and Middle Registers

(left to right)

Text for Middle Register Left of Gate and Bottom Register

Thus they are in their physical forms invisible to Horus (Ra) on that lightless magic path leading to the most concealed mystery. They have charge over the holy road by which one enters into Hell's most hidden. They protect Anubis as he drags Ra's bier, and guard his back as passes from and leaves this sacred terrain.

Despite being explicitly identified twice, Anubis does not actually appear in this hour due to the extreme delicacy of the Egyptians regarding the facts of death. Nonetheless, the figures in this section form an unambiguous funeral cortège.

Hour Four

Text for Middle Register Left of Gate and Bottom Register

Wnn.sn m sh3r pn, m ss2m.sn n d2(w)t.sn jmnw(t) n H2r h2r wat tn d2srt nt jmnt s2taw. Wnn.sn jmyw-r wat dsrt nt a2q jmnt nt dwat. Ntsn saa(w) Jnpw m ss2mw.f n st2a, a2pj.n.f h2r.sn m ta dsr.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Two Serpents Guarding the Path

"Praiser" appears thus, a guardian of the path: with her two heads, one serpent and one human, she embodies and glorifies the likeness of Ra.

"Hidden" looks like this, guardian of this secret road through Deadlock. He never leaves his post ever, but lives just by hearing the voice of the gods of this road

The first serpent, "Praiser," recapitulates the image of Ra at the far right of this register, entirely concealed within the serpent of time and night. The human head on Praiser's back shows that the god is within the serpent. (We saw this style of representation in the middle register of the second hour, where Ra was shown on his boat, *inside* a crocodile.)

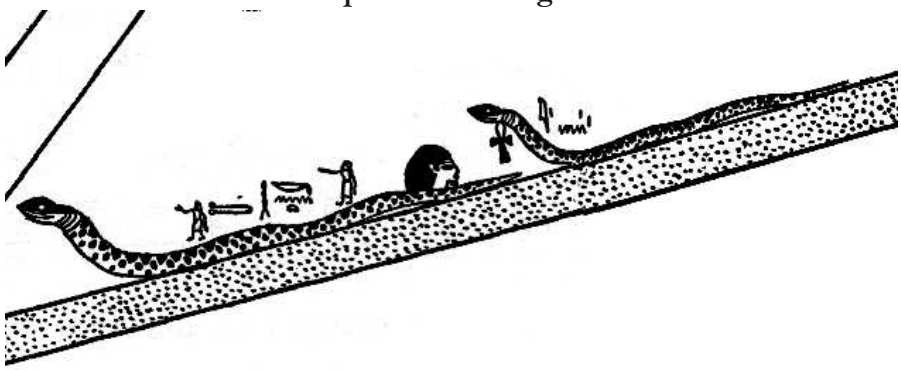
The second of the snakes, "Hidden", also echoes Ra entirely disappeared within the body of night. His presence within the serpent is hinted by the *ank* at the serpent's head.

Sokar's realm is, as one might expect from the depths of the underworld, a strangely negative place. It seems to reflect aspects of those who enter it more than to have its own positive features. Thus many of the figures Ra encounters here are "manifestations of Ra," lesser recapitulations of his being and experience.

One should not make too much of the declarations that this or that figure never leaves its place. It may mean that the spirit represented is a fixture of the landscape, but it can equally mean that this is how Ra always manifests as he reaches a given point in his journey.

Hour Four

Two Serpents Guarding the Path



H2knt. Wnn.s m sh3r pn m sawt nt wat tn. H2kn.s m h2rwy.s(y) n ss2mw a2a nt(y) jm.s.

Jmn. Wnn.f m sh3r pn, jmy-r n wat tn s2tawt nt Jmh2t. N s2m.n.f r st nb ra2 nb, anh3.f m h3rw nt2rw wat tn.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Five Deities

Thus they appear, as guides who see for Horus — or perhaps as mirages on the road, or reflections of Horus's (Ra's) being.

They rise up from the earth of Deadlock's hidden pathways, and this road they walk has been here since the earliest age of the world.

Horned, Toothed, Baboon, Clawed, Traveler.

The boat-bier of Ra is immediately preceded by five protective deities.

The first, "horned", has a set of horns on her head, "Toothed" is lioness-headed.

"Baboon" is a seated judge (he has, incorrectly, a human head in Budge's version).

The last two, "Clawed" and "Road Spirit," have no distinguishing marks.

Hour Four

Five Deities

Wnn.sn m sh3r pn m maa n H2r (or ss2m jrjw.n wat).[1] *A2h2a2.sn m ta r wat tn s2tat nt Jmh2t, a2qt.sn, nt sp tpy m ta.*

T2st Wpt, H2ngt, Bn(t){ny}, S2at(y)t, Mt2nyt.

[1] The glyph could be read either way. Both senses are applicable.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Snake Bier

Ra will come, a serpent smooth and fast.

Thus he appears in his boat which the grave protects. When he pauses on the secret paths of the dead he will draw life from the words his human-headed boat speaks.

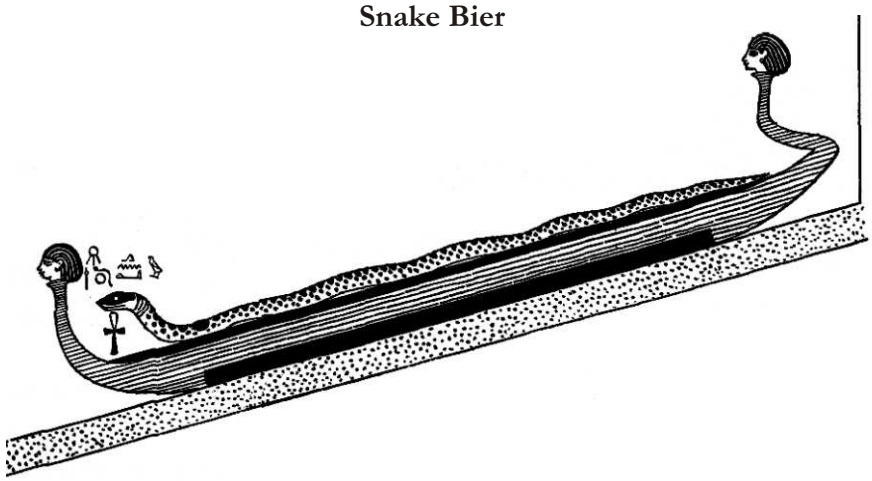
Ra is here shown entirely inside the serpent which is time. The *ank* below the serpent's head indicates that Ra yet lives. The general text which introduced this section makes it clear that the boat is a kind of bier.

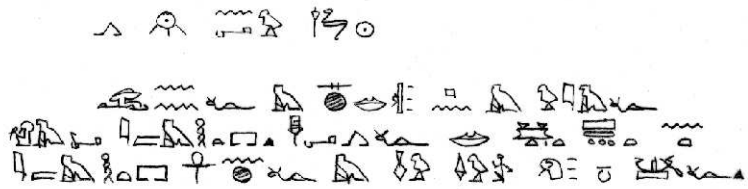
The boat has two heads to show that it is itself a divine being, and that it navigates independently. The heads also conjure air for Ra to breathe: they speak it into being through magic formulae.

Ra is pausing here to take a breath before the final phase of his descent.

Hour Four

Snake Bier





Jw Ra2 na2w[1] *h2d2.*

Wnn.f m sh3r pn m wja.f saa(w) Jmh2t. A2h2a2.f r wat s2tat nt Jmh2t, a2nh3.f m h3rw mdw tpw n wja.f

[1] I have retained the enigmatic spelling here because of the play on words. We could read this word as the adjective *na2a2*, "smooth;" the verb *na2j*, "to travel;" or the noun *na2w*, "snake." All three meanings are appropriate, and so all three appear in the translation.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Middle Register

Friends of Horus

(right to left)

Brings Life, Onuris, Commander, Mistress of Life.

The only one of these names which is positively identifiable is Onuris, a minor war god who is one of Horus' advocates in *The Case of Horus vs. Seth*. (in vol. one). The "Mistress of Life" is probably Hathor. The appearance of four of Horus' friends, all holding out *anks*, gives hope to the descending god.

Hour Four

Friends of Horus

Ss2mw A2nh3, Jnj-H2rt, Wd2-Mdw, Nbt A2nh3.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Gods of the Wedjat Procession

(left to right)

Content, Healthy Face, In Charge of His Sarcophagus, Crowned Brow.

These four figures make up a confident composite-portrait of Ra at this stage of his journey. "Content," with a magic staff, shows that Ra negotiates well the path before him, while "Healthy Face" suggest that Ra will soon be looking less corpselike.

"In Charge of His Sarcophagus" is has two ropes instead of a head: this confirms that the group is an echo of the Solar Barque group to the far right, who drag the sun's boat with tow ropes. Finally, "Crowned Brow" with the crown of Upper Egypt, the same crown Osiris wears in the next group, hints at Ra's mystic identification with Osiris.

Horus Reaches Out For It, Sokar's *Wedjat*, Thoth Brings.

Falcon-headed Horus receives the *Wedjat*, a human eye with the markings of a hawk's eye, from ibis-headed Thoth. The *Wedjat* is shown above rather than on their hands for the sake of visual clarity.

The *Wedjat* is the eye of Horus which was torn apart by Seth but later miraculously restored. The component lines of the *wedjat* were used in mathematics to represent fractions. Complemented by these associations, the *wedjat* also symbolizes the full moon, or a full measure of grain. Both of these latter concepts are appropriate here, since Osiris is identified both with the rebirth of the moon and the new grain. The "Lunar Sequence" in the lower register amplifies the meaning of this scene.

Thoth, as god of mathematics, has charge of the moon's monthly restoration and is the reckoner of the harvest.

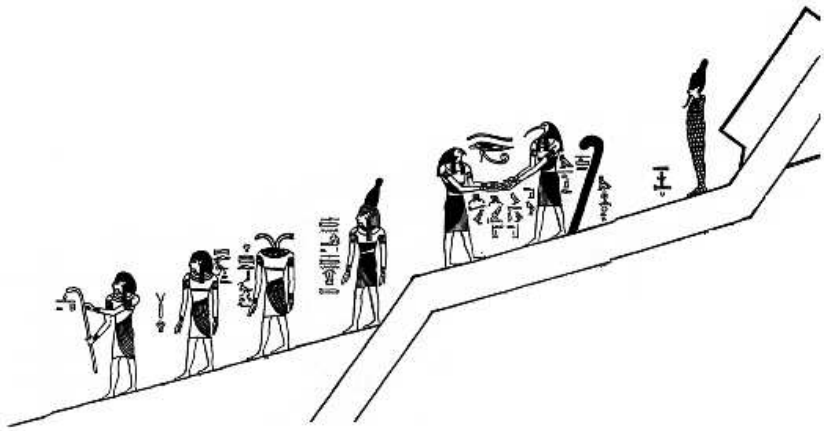
The overall sense of this vignette is the restoration of fullness (the *wedjat*) to Ra (Horus), presided over by Thoth (the order and logic of the universe).

Staff of Osiris, Osiris Wearing his Necklace.

The staff represents Osiris' authority over this region, while his representation with the heavy necklace shows his majesty.

Hour Four

Gods of the Wedjat Procession



H2tp, Wad2 H2r, H2ry D2bat.f, St2nj H2at.

Aw-A2, Skry, Wt2sw.

Mst Wsjr, Ma2nh3ty.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Ra's Procession, Part Two: Middle and Upper Registers

Path and Midway Gate

The second and third (from the top) sections of the pathway zigzagging across the registers, one level with the upper register and one crossing the middle register, show Ra's progress from the gate at the right of the top register, and then his descent into the middle register to the gate at its center. (The gates are the oblong projections from the path).

Path

Secret down-ramps of Gravesmouth and Ra's gateway: when he's passed these, he'll be heard (though not seen).

Entry road for the corpse of Sokar Whose Throne is the Grave Mound, a way unviewable, lost to sight.

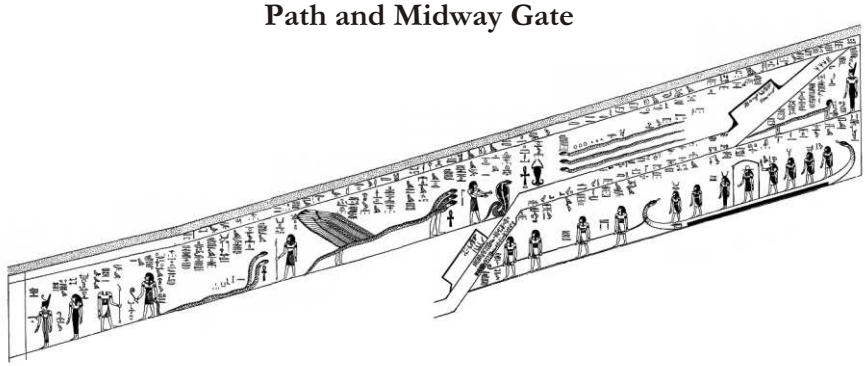
The "corpse of Sokar" refers to dead Ra, here precociously identified with Sokar, the dead aspect of Osiris.

Gate

Cuts a Path Through the Dirt Like a New Knife

Hour Four

Path and Midway Gate



Wat st2at nt R-St2aw, sba nt2r; {n} s2m.n n.f sn, h3rw.f pw sd2m.sn.

Wat nt a2qt h4at nt Skr H2ry S2a2j.f: ss2m s2ta n maa, n ptr.

Mds maw[1] *ta.*

[1] I have kept the enigmatic spelling for the sake of the pun: we can read this either as *maa2w*, "which leads through," or as *maw*, "new."

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Text over Sun's Barque

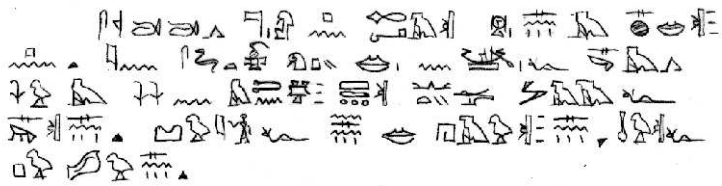
Thus, in a boat become a serpent, the great god sails past the spirits of this hour. The snake heads at bow and stern utter fire, and that lights him along the secret unseeable paths. Ra calls to the spirits of this hour, in what he guesses is their general direction, and that is how they come to even hear his voice.

Dragging the Boat

Stretches out the Plumb-Line of Truth, Ropesman, Cable Chief, Mysterious Being.

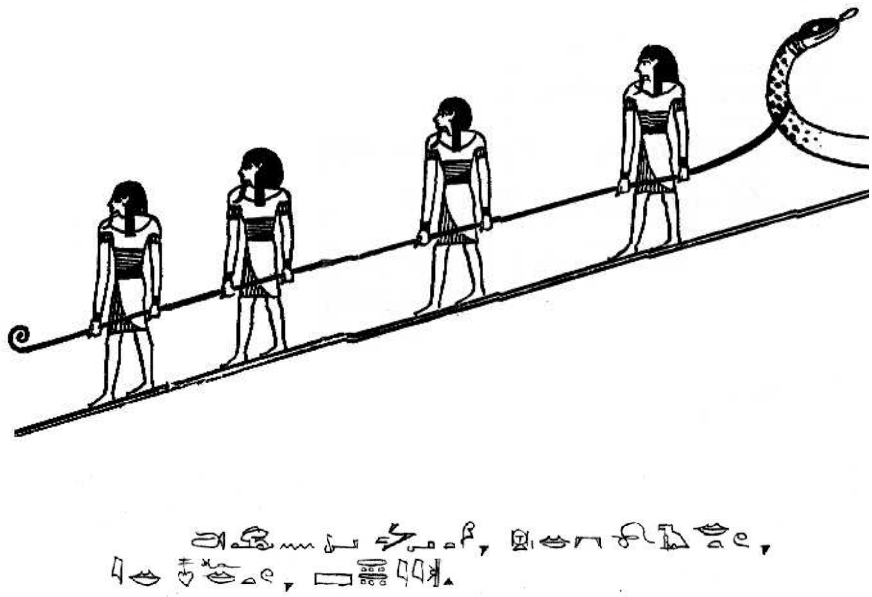
Hour Four

Text over Sun's Barque



Sqdd nt2r pn a2a h2r sn m sh3r pn. Jn sd2t tpy-r n wja.f ss2m sw m nn n mt2nw s2taw jwty maa.f ss2m.sn. Dwj.f n.sn r haw.sn, h3rw.f pw sd2mw.sn.

Dragging the Boat



Dwn Maawt,[1] *H2ry Wart, Jry Nfrt, S2tawy.*

[1] *Maa2t* here means "tow rope," but the ostrich feather determinative gives the added sense indicated in the translation.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Solar Barque and Crew

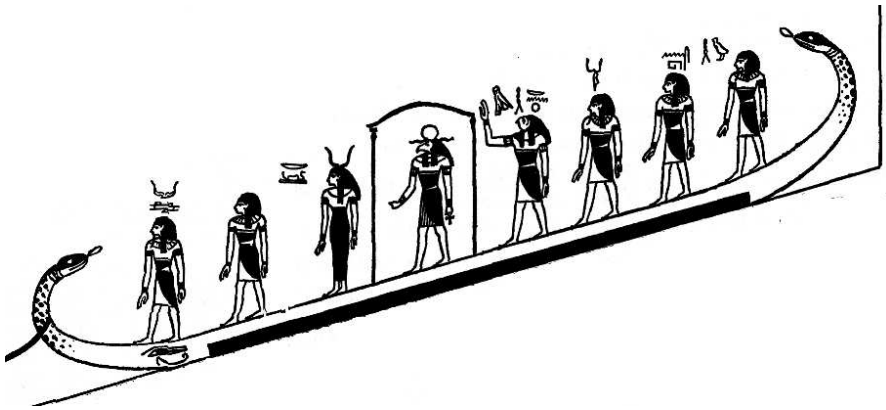
Barque: Cuts Itself a Path

Crew: Wep-Wawet, Sia, Mistress of the Boat, Flesh, Horus the Embalmer, Soul of Truth, Wide Awake, Hu.

With the same crew as in previous hours, the boat itself has changed into a serpent to slide over the graveyard sands of Sokar's realm. Since the boat is now become an autonomous being, there is no longer any need for a rudder.

Hour Four

Solar Barque and Crew



Dm Wat.
Wpj-Wawt, Sja, Nb(t) Wja, Jwf, H2r H2knw, Ka Maat, Nhs, Hw.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Four Deities

(left to right)

Thus they appear, like mirages, images which the road itself has created, or perhaps they are projections of the soul of Horus (Ra). It is they who guard the serpent-bier that holds Ra, the god who guards the world; it is they who conduct along this sacred path to the great mystery.

North, South, Praise-Bellowing Crocodile.

This group begins with crowned figures Lower and Upper Egypt (the crown is missing from Upper Egypt in Budge's version). These goddesses indicate Ra's kingship.

The headless figure facing backwards is part of the Neheb-Kaw group (see below).

The third god is represented in most versions with a crocodile's head. He holds a rope with one hand, and the rear head of Neheb-Kaw (see below) in the other. He echoes the cable crew who draw forward the sun's serpent barque in the middle register. Like them he grasps a rope and tugs forward a great snake. He shows that some of Neheb-Kaw's below-ground vitality accompanies Ra.

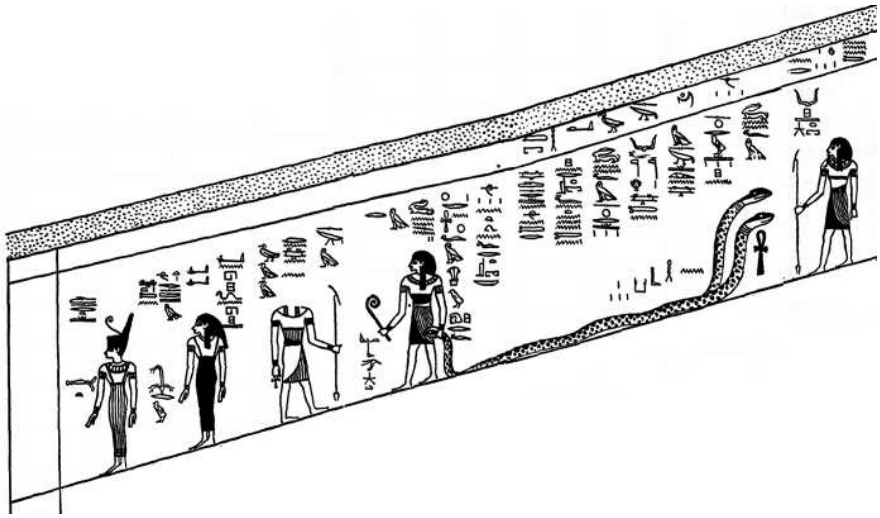
Seth, who rules the desert which is Hell, Seth who divides the world with Horus, looks like this. He is a mirage, an image the road itself has created, or perhaps he is a projection of the soul of Horus (Ra).

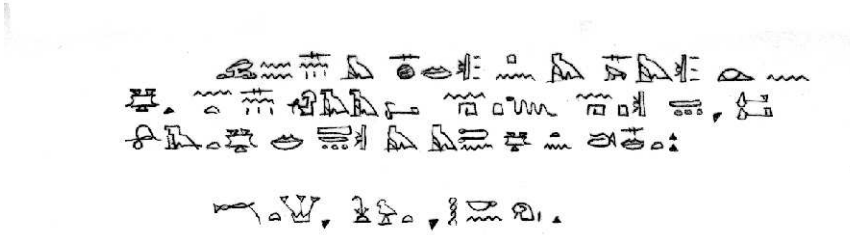
The last figure in this group of four has the head of Seth in most other versions. He holds a power scepter.

When the kingdom of Egypt was finally awarded to Horus, Seth was given rule over all waste and desert regions. Since the realm of Sokar is all desert, Seth belongs here.

Hour Four

Four Deities





Wnn.sn m sh3r pn m ss2mw jrj(w).n wat (or H2r).[1] *Ntsn saa Nhp*[2] *nhp ta, dd wat r s2ta m mt2n dsrt{t}*

Mh2t, Rswt, H2knw Tp.

[1] Both readings possible and both are given in the translation.

[2] The reading of *Nhp* as the name of the serpent boat is suggested by the snake determinative: Hornung points out that *Nhp* is the name of a snake-headed bier in the Book of Gates.

Wpj Dwat wnn.f m sh3r pn m ss2m jrj(w).n H2r (or wat), wpj.f nt2rwy h2r mt2n.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Neheb-Kaw Group

(right to left)

This sequence of figures, from the scorpion to the three-headed serpent being dragged by its third head, defines the hour. It centers on the three headed snake Neheb-Kaw, a name which we might render concisely as "The Giver of Energy."

Ka is a particularly rich word: its meanings include: active strength, stamina, fertility, potence, generosity and exuberance.

The *Ka* is a part of the soul, the part that remains in the ground with the dead, unlike the *Ak* which ascends to the stars, or the *Ba* which is able to move about in the upper world. Rooted in the land, the *Ka* exerts its good influence for its surviving family. In this way it is very comparable to the Roman *Lar* — which is also represented in art as a serpent!

The fourth hour brings Ra to the level of *Kas:* we may view the transformation of Ra's barque into a serpent as his assimilation to the mode of being appropriate to this level.

According to the mythology, Neheb-Kaw, the source and archetype of all *Kas,* dates back to the time before the creation: he is the original unexpended energy of the universe. We should read his three heads as signifying the limitless creative power of chaos: the Egyptians used the number three as a symbol for "many,"

Neheb-Kaw was honored at flood-time, as the one who returned the fields to their chaotic state and so made possible the renewal of the *Ka* (growth capacity) of the crops.

Sereqet

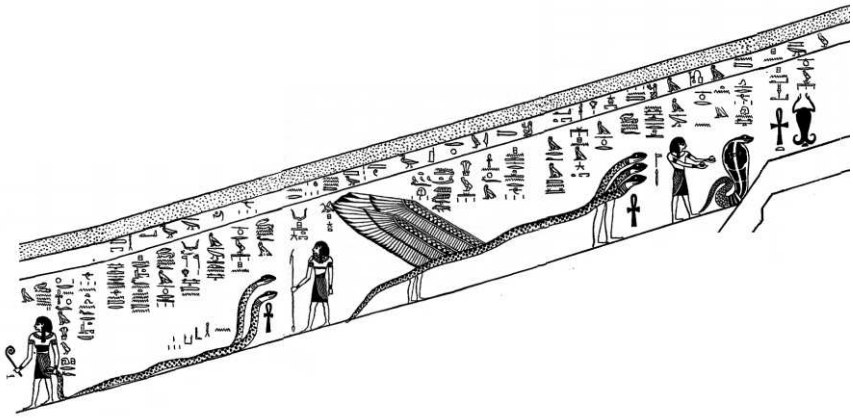
The ever-living Sereqet looks like this: she's stationed at Gravesmouth, at the very top of the way down.

Sereqet, the scorpion goddess, acts here as a protector of Ra, just like Wadjet, the goddess who is the protective cobra-crown worn by Ra and Pharaoh. Thus Sereqet is depicted twice, as the glyph for scorpion, and in cobra form.

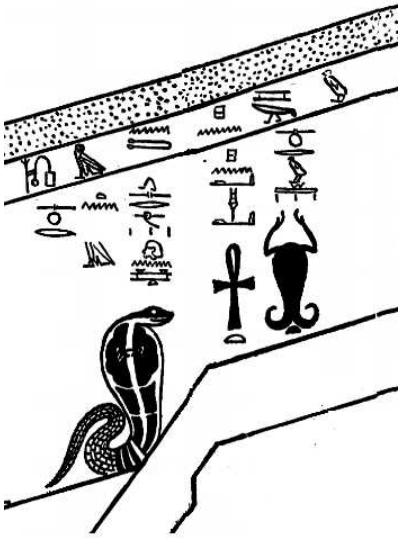
Sereqet is also appropriate here because she is the mother of Neheb-Kaw.

Hour Four

Neheb-Kaw Group



Sereqet



Srqt anh3t: wnn.s m sh3r pn, a2h2a2.s (r) R-St2aw, tp(yt) n(t) wat tn.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

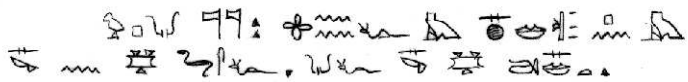
Thoth

Thoth, reconciler of the rival gods Horus and Seth. Thus he appears, like Horus himself, holding up the sun and the moon, his two eyes, by which he lights the world. He makes distinct and visible the magical pathway.

Thoth is shown holding up the two eyes of the sky god Horus: they are shown in their simplest form, as circles that represent pupils. He provides additional light at the very point where the path slopes abruptly down. Thoth appears here because he controls the time-cycles that bring about the reappearance of the sun and the renewal of the moon.

Hour Four

Thoth



Wpj(w) nt2rwy: wnn.f m sh3r pn, m ss2m n H2r d2s.f, wpj.f ss2m wat dsrt.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

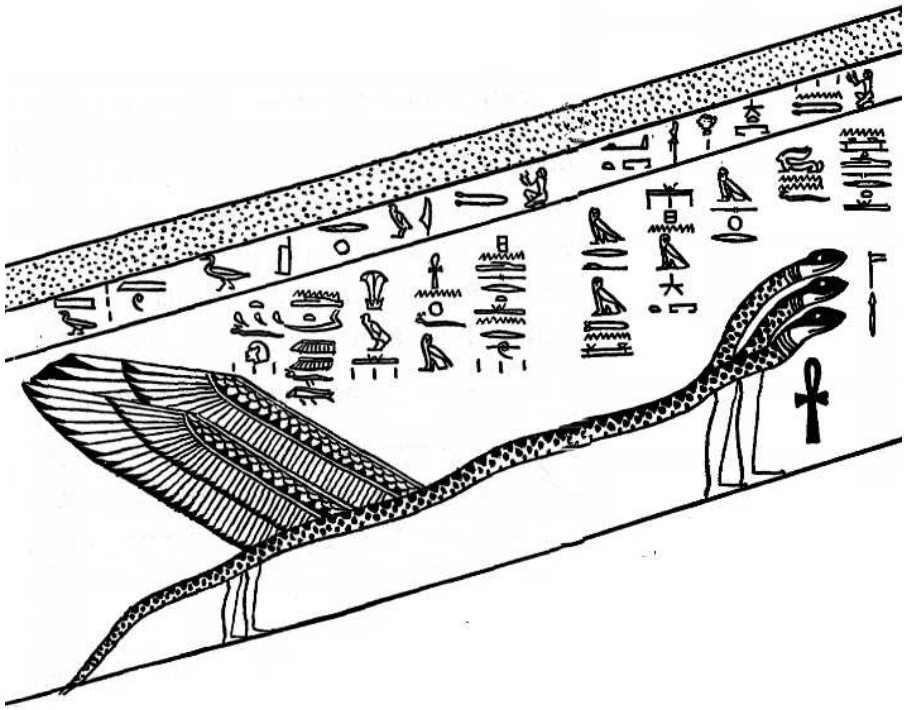
Winged Neheb-Kaw

The great living god as he appears in Hell, in charge of the magic path through Gravesmouth. His multiple body with his three heads will remain alive by breathing the wind from his wings.

The four legs of Neheb-Kaw indicate that this is his fixed position and proper station. For a snake it would be leglessness that indicated mobility. The wings do not indicate mobility either: rather, they show Neheb-Kaw's ability to generate air in the airless underworld. In tomb art, wings, sails and fans are ordinarily used as symbols of air and life in the world of the dead.

Hour Four

Winged Neheb-Kaw



Nt2r a2a a2nh3 wnn.f m sh3r pn m dwat, jmy-r mt2n pn dsr n R-St2aw. Anh3.f m t2aw n dmaty.fy, h4awt.f tpw.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Seth

This figure, facing left, is part of the group of four deities discussed above.

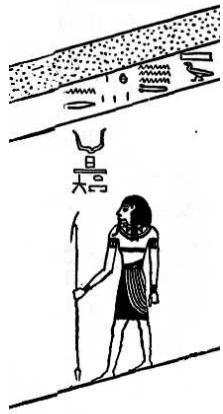
Neheb-Kaw

The Giver of Growth and Energy, Neheb-Kaw, looks like this in his position on the sacred path that leads down Gravesmouth. He'll never ever move from here, and he'll stay alive by breathing in the air he creates by uttering spells.

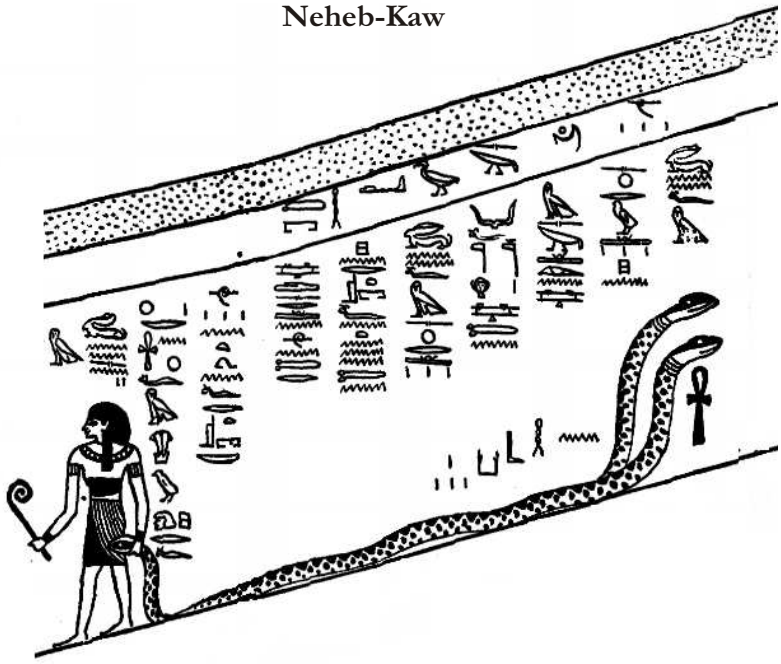
This is also Neheb-Kaw, but shown in another aspect.

Hour Four

Seth



Neheb-Kaw



Nh2b Kaw wnn.f m sh3r pn r st.f nt mt2n dsr n R-St2aw. N s2m.n.f r st nb ra2 nb anh3.f m wd2 tp-r.f.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Neheb-Kaw in Human Form

Shimmers in the Helldark

This headless figure, though human in form, is probably another aspect of Neheb-Kaw: like his two predecessors, he is shown with an *ank*. The headlessness is not intentional: in other copies he has a falcon's head.

Hour Four

Neheb-Kaw in Human Form

A2ba Dwat

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

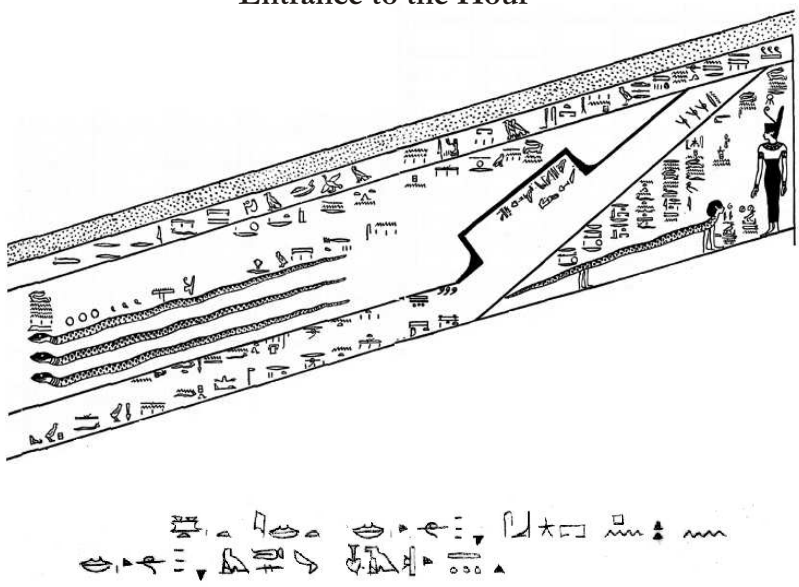
Entrance to the Hour

Inscriptions Beside and in the Pathway

Gravesmouth Road and its door: this way to Gravesmouth and the gate that cuts off escape and seals you within.

Hour Four

Entrance to the Hour



Wat jryt R-*St2aw, sba pn; n* R-*St2aw, mds sma-ta.*

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Crowned Goddess

The register begins (far right) with a goddess wearing the crown of Lower Egypt.

She's where the un-rise started.

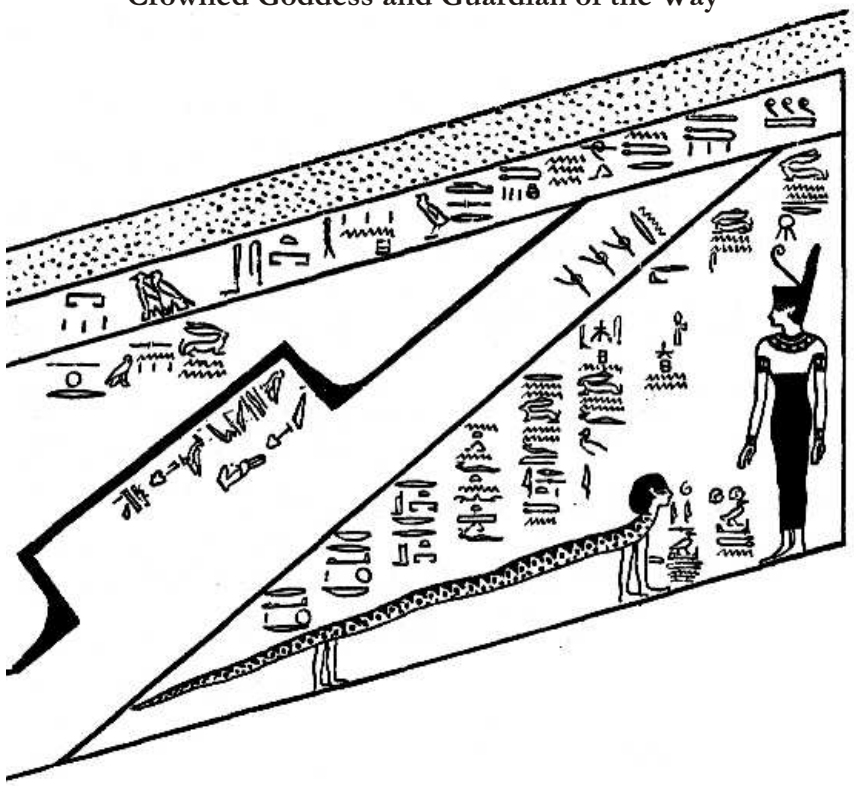
Guardian of the Way

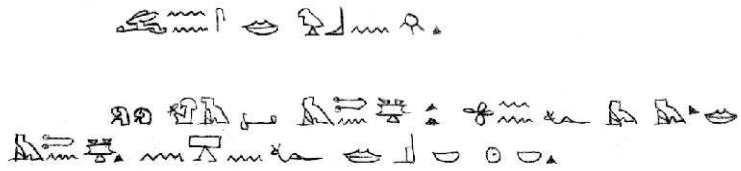
Human headed serpent, guardian of the way. He never moves, but always stands here.

The snake is itself a symbol of swift motion: the addition of four unbending human legs indicates immobility. The bearded human head indicates that it is a divinity. Possibly a hypostasis of Neheb-Kaw.

Hour Four

Crowned Goddess and Guardian of the Way





Wnn.s r wbn.

Tpy saw mt2n: wnn.f m jmy-r mt2n. N s2m.n.f r st nb ra2 nb.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

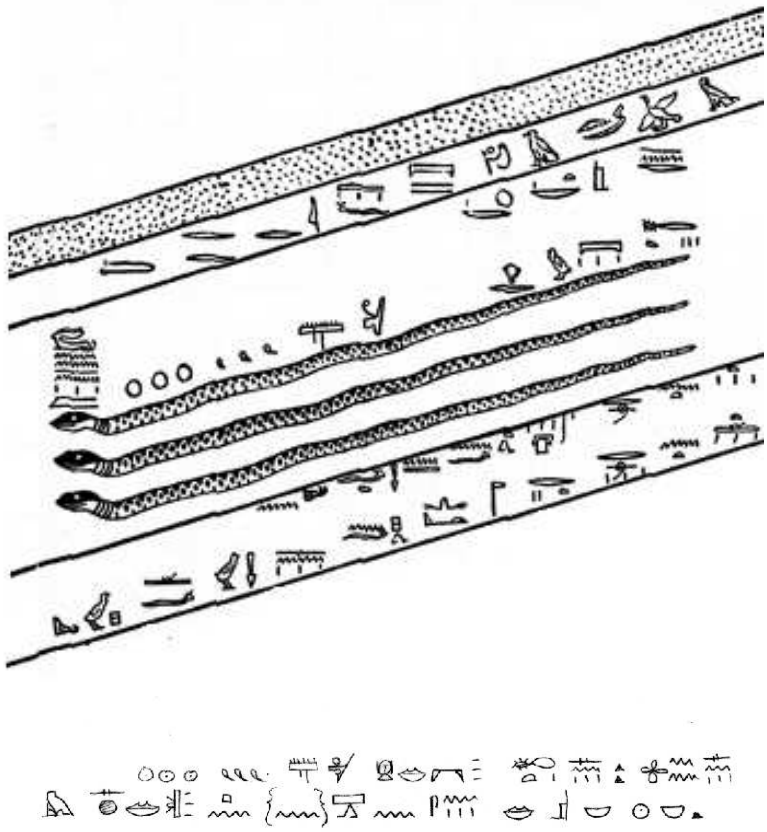
Three Serpents

Bodies of Ra, these stay on their bellies. Thus they appear when they are forced to take this road.

These serpents show another aspect of Ra on his journey: they focus on the encounter with the similarly triple and serpentine Neheb-Kaw. Three horizontal serpents have already appeared as a symbol for Ra in the middle register of the first hour.

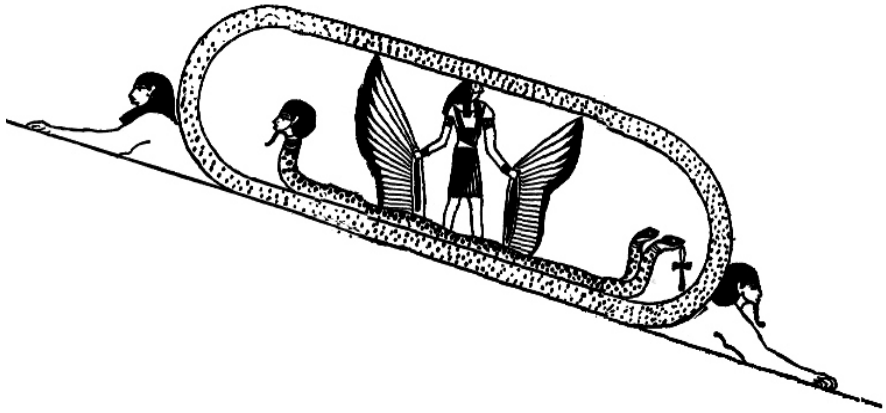
Hour Four

Three Serpents



Jwfw Ra2 mnj h2ryw h2wt.sn: wn.sn m sh3r pn n s2m.sn r st nb ra2 nb.

Hour Five:



The Cave of Sokar

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Poem

Ra says:

West, give me your hand, for beautiful is the road I sail to you, O palace and center of the earth, beautiful is the graveyard path!

You gods who accompany me, here you'll find peace, here you'll go under, here is death and happiness.

Breathe, august pantheon that emerged into existence from my body, o pantheon I created,

though now you suffer non-being, though now your forms be in stasis and your ribs don't rise with breath.

When I call to you, you greet me with all honor. You've been ordained for me.

When I greet you, you stand out, emerge from the darkness to once more be.

When you've taken your stand at the water's edge,

assumed your posts on the banks of Hell's river,

you'll loose the flood that drowns and returns to life,

you'll loose the baptism of the blessed dead, the floodwaters of Nun

and you'll lead these lucky drowned ones to the shores of your overflowed land.

Your waters, they don't sink. Your river, it doesn't go dry.

The height of your banks, it's never bare of crops. O watchers by the waters,

salute Ra who sails your flood, let him pass you in peace.

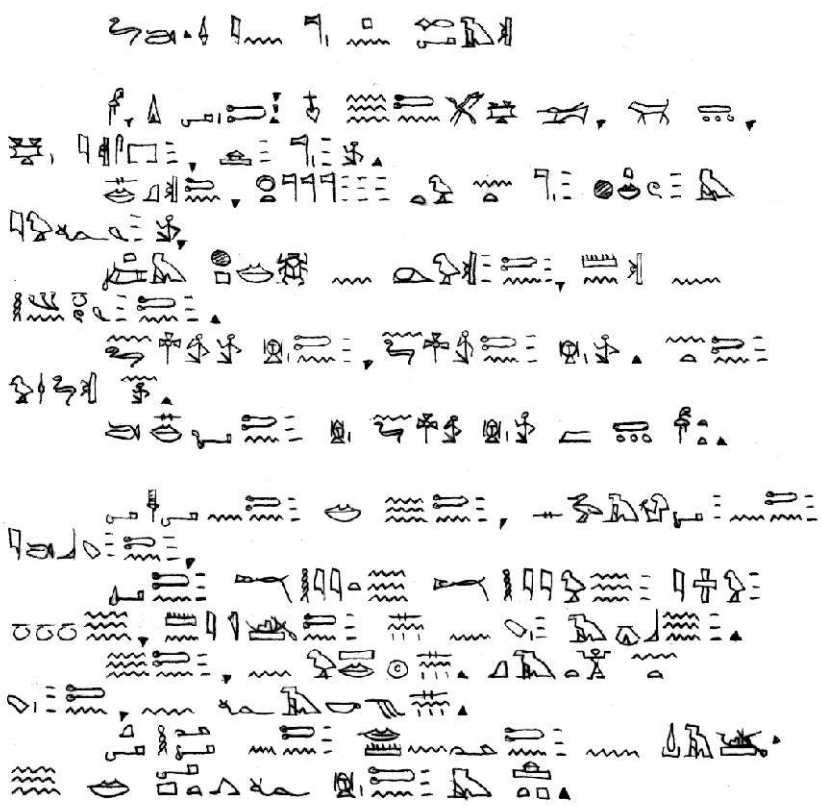
D2d-mdw jn nt2r pn a2a:[1]

Jmntt, dj a2.t2! Nfr mt2n wr, h4nw ta, wat jsw, h2tpw[2] *nt2rw.j.*
Srq.t2n, psd2t tw nt nt2rw h3prw m jwf.j,
tm-h3pr(w) n jrw.t2n, mn n h2nw.t2n.
Nd2.j (h2r.)t2n, nd2.t2n h2r.j. Nt2n wd2w n.j.
Dsr.{s}<t2>n h2r nd2-h2r.j m ta jmntt.

A2h2a2.n.t2n r mw.t2n, saj.n.t2n jdbw.t2n,
dj.t2n mh2t mh2yw jmyw Nnw, mnj.t2n sn n jdbw agbw.
Mw.t2n, n ws2r.sn. Qajt n(t) jdbw.t2n, n fak.sn.
Qa2h2 n.t2n rmn.t2n n d2aj-mw r a2pt(.f) h2r.t2n m h2tp.

[1] In this hour there has been a particular effort to integrate the poem with the illustration. On tomb walls, the poem was divided into small sections and parcelled out

Hour Five



among the parts of the image that illustrate them. I have here reassembled the complete poem.

[2] The word *h2tpw* has the full range of meanings given in the translation.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Guard your box, Isis and Nephthys, guard Osiris' coffin,
loud be your screamed laments, true and strong be your throats!
hidden be the dead shape you've guarded, the body of Osiris!
You've spread your wings, fluttered down to perch upon the box,
performed the ritual of mourning so I might now pass by you in peace.

O holy serpent, greet me with a bow,
lower your heads, withdraw your coilings, open the passage to me!
You spray no burning venom at me or my crew
and so I may pass you in peace.

You butchers at your blocks who stand there
overpowering the sinful dead,
may your spells ring out, your magic force radiate,
your strength become effective and your power great!
Now crush your enemies, annihilate those who did evil,
hack to bits their Shadows, the doomed are yours to destroy!

Saw n.t2n hnw.t2n,
qajt n h3rw.t2n, maa2 n h2tywt.t2n,
jmn ss2mw pn[1] *sa{a}w.t2n.*
Wpj.n.t2n dmawt.t2n, jrj.n(.t2n) jrw.t2n
r a2pjt.j h2r.t2n m h2tp.[2]

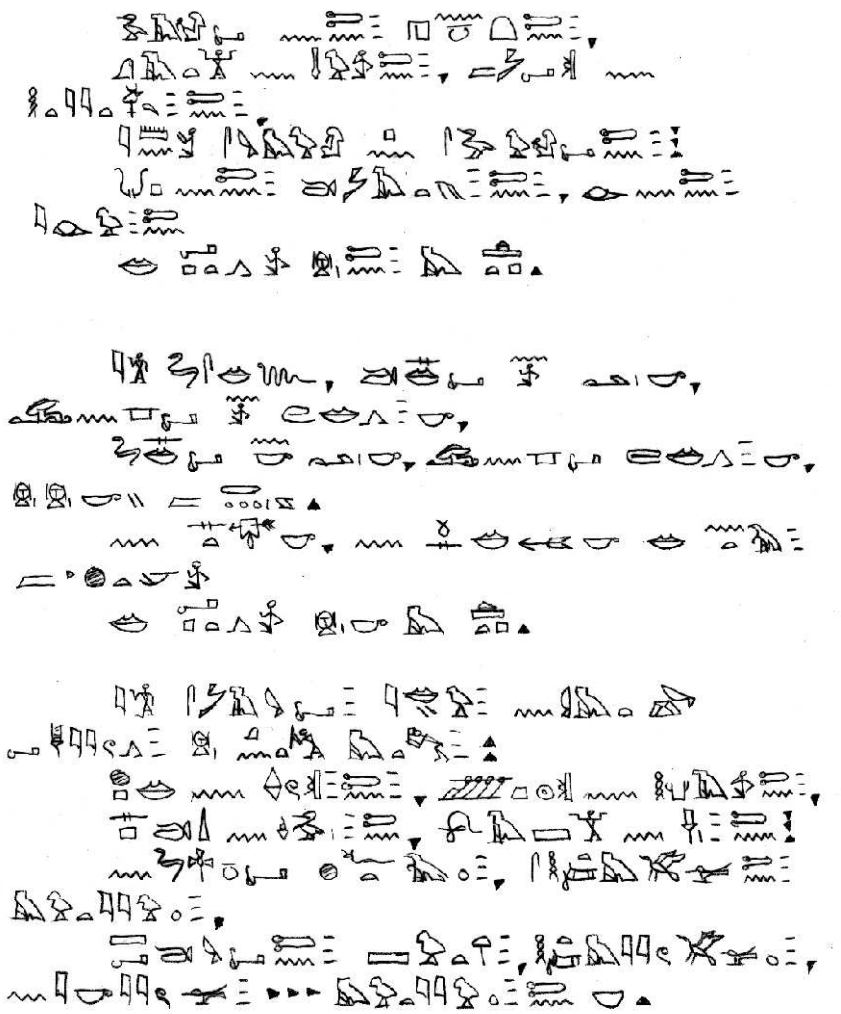
J d2sr, d2sr n.j rmn.ḳ, wn n.j ph2r.ḳ,
d2sr n.ḳ rmn.ḳ, wn ph4r.ḳ, h2rwy.ḳy m ta!
N stj.ḳ wj, n ss2r.ḳ r ntyw m h3t.j
r a2pt.j h2r.ḳ m h2tp.

J smaw jryw nmt, a2h2a2yw h2r qnjt mwtw:
h3pr n mdw.t2n, ss2p n h2kaw.t2n,
spd n baw.t2n, was2 n sh3mw.t2n!
Nd2(.t2n) h3ftyw, sh2tm.t2n mwtyw,
s2a2d.t2n s2wt, h2tmyw, njḳyw — mwtw(.t2n) nb(w){.t2n}.

[1] The text has *pn ss2mw*, which I reverse with Hornung.

[2] The translation of these lines is not so audacious as may first appear, if we recognize (as the illustrator has) the allusion to Isis and Nephthys, and if we scrupulously maintain the text as written. *Lectio difficilior praeferenda.*

Hour Five



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Here in Hell's deep, you're the ones who salute Osiris himself,
who address Osiris, hell's stern judge, and hear his decrees.
Good edge to your flint blades, strength to your slaughtering blocks,
tightness to your knotted cords that hold the doomed helpless in place,
may your hands be at your tasks, the tasks that are a part of you,
till I have crossed beyond you in peace.

The gods of hell greet Ra:

Welcome, lord of life! Enter in peace, contentment of the buried!
Opener of earth, you who unlock the ground,
sky-dweller who brings ease to these underground skies as well,
victorious, vindicated, deceased! lord of all the gods!

May the ground open wide to recieve its king,
may death's gentle realm widen its ways
and smooth its roads for your passage.
May your voice be heard by Osiris, your call by Sokar's land
so falcon-headed Sokar-Osiris may live anew!

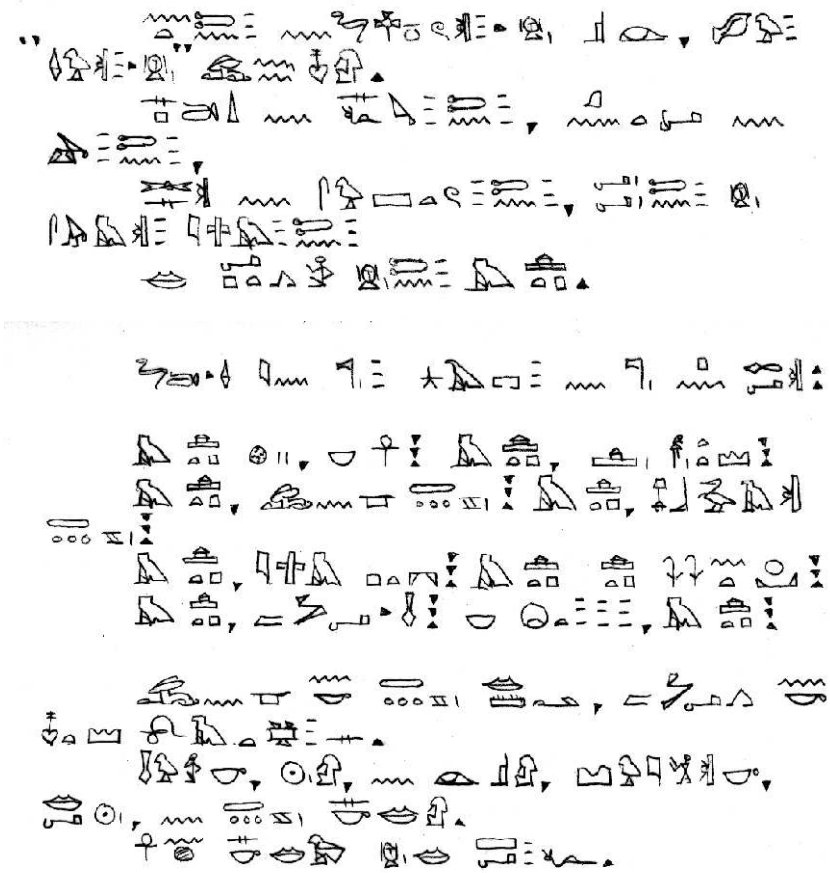
Ntt2n nd2-h2r Wsjr, sd2mw "mdw-h2r" Wnn-Nfr.
Spd n sfw.t2n, qnt n nmwt.t2n,
t2s n sws2wt.t2n, a2wy.t2n h2r ss2mw jmyw.t2n
r a2pjt.j h2r.t2n m h2tp.

D2d-mdw jn nt2rw dwatyw n nt2r pn a2a:

M h2tp sp sn, nb a2nh3! M h2tp, h2tp Jmntt!
M h2tp, wn ta! M h2tp, wba ta!
M h2tp, jmy pt! M h2tp, h2tp nnt!
M h2tp, maa2-h3rw! Nb psd2t, m h2tp!

Wn n.k ta rmn, maa2 n.k Nfrt wawt.s.
H3rw.k, Ra2, n Wsjr, d2wj.k, Ra2, n ta Skr,
a2nh3 Skr h2ry s2a2j.f.

Hour Five



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Come to Kepri, Ra!
to Kepri, the god of coming-to-be,
Ra, come and become!
Carry that cable for Ra, you gods
— the tow-rope to draw him through, pull him into being.
Kepri, lord of beginning and becoming,
he'll reach out a hand to pull Ra through,
he'll ease the secret roads Ra must travel,
the underground way from dusk to dawn,
the road of Ra-Two-Horizons,

the heavens are content, contented are the heavens,
O Ra of the beautiful sunset west,
O Ra of the beautiful Hell.

Ra says:

I have recognized your hidden, secret form, Osiris-Sokar,
I will call to you, to your transfigured soul: my words to you are praises!
May Isis watch over your form, great Sokar, may she tend your corpse!
She is your body's guardian.

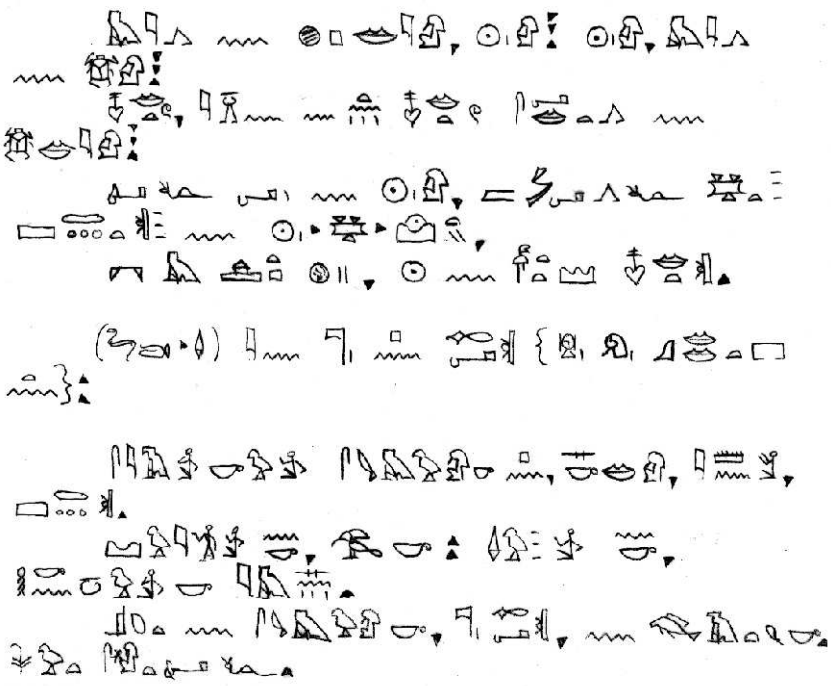
Mj n H3prj, Ra2! Ra2, mj n H3prj!
Nfrt, jnj n.tn nfrt sa2rt n H3prj!
Dj.f a2 n Ra2, maa2.f wawt s2tawt n Ra2-H2r-Ah3ty,
Pt m h2tp sp sn, Ra n jmntt nfrt.

(D2d-mdw) jn nt2r pn a2a {h2r tp qrrt tn}[1]

Sja.kwy ss2mw.k pn, Skr, jmn, s2ta.
D2wj n.k, (n) ah3.k: mdw.j n.k, h2knw.k jm.sn.[2]
Ast n ss2mw.k, nt2r a2a, n h4at.k. Swt saa(t).f.[3]

[1] Evidently an addition to better integrate the lines with the image.
[2] Lit. "My words are to you, your praises are (contained) in them (in my words)."
[3] This last phrase I take as a participial statement beginning with the archaic independent pronoun. The *f* refers back to *ss2mw*.

Hour Five



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

The goddesses of the underworld say to Ra:

When Ra enters Hell in peace,
when Ra's road smooths and widens before him,
when he comes in his underground boat, which is his body,
his enemies will be annihilated before him.
In the west, Ra, you'll set here in the furthest west,
and you'll go up again, a great *ba,*
a winged soul, the rising sun,
you'll surmount the eastern horizon,
more powerful than all the powers arrayed there against you.
You will be towed forward, this thing shall come to pass,
along with your enemies' rout and your own strength's vindication.

Ra says:

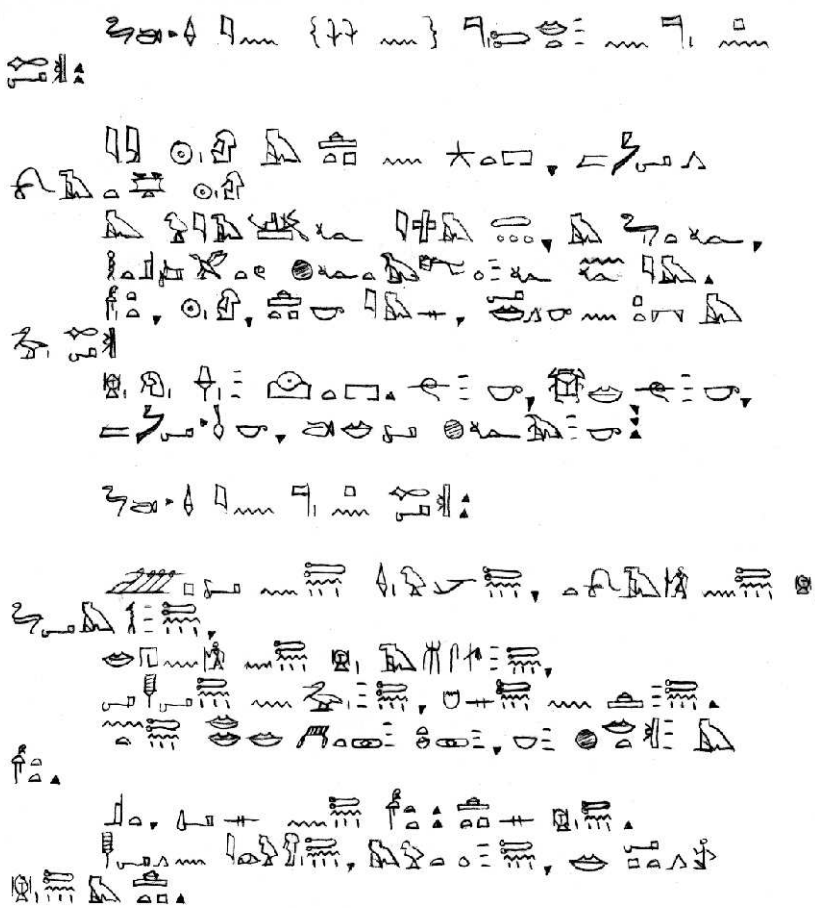
Take up your walking sticks,
O nobles of Osiris' inner court,
lift yourselves up on your shepherd staves,
lean upon your royal canes to greet me.
You will stand up, strong; you will sit down, contented.
You are the ones who wait on Osiris the generous,
and thus you are the ones in charge of the bread
presented at the altars of the dead,
you are the ones who see to all needs
in the land beyond the sunset.
Isis, she places the land of the dead in your care,
may she be content with your work!
Now your subjects, the dead, have dutifully stood up,
paying me their respects till I pass you all in peace.

D2d-mdw jn {nn n}nt2rwt n nt2r pn a2a:

Jj Ra2 m h2tp n Dwat, maa2 wat Ra2
m wja.f jmy-ta, m d2t.f.
h2tm.tw h3ftyw.f n.{k}(f) jm.
Jmntt, Ra2, h2tp.k jm.s, (j)a2r.k n pt m ba a2a
h2r tp sh3mw ah3t. St2aw.k, h3pr st2aw.k,
maa2-h3rw.k, dr h3ftyw.k!

D2d-mdw jn nt2r pn a2a:

Hour Five



S2sp n.t2n mdw.t2n, (t)wa n.t2n (h2r) d2a2mw.t2n,
rhn n.t2n (h2r) amsw.t2n,
a2h2a2.t2n n[1] baw.t2n, h2ms.t2n n h2tp.t2n.
Ntsn jryw awt t, nbw h3rwt m jmntt.
Ast, dj.s n.t2n jmntt—h2tp.s h2r.t2n.
A2h2a2.n jryw.tn, mwtw.t2n, r a2pt.j h2r.t2n m h2tp.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

The secret road to the fountain of renewal, the womb of rebirth,
the dragging of Ra's boat down it:
this road leads through the gate of Isis' womb,
which Seth fears like a lion's cave!

The secret road to Sokar's land, the road Isis once walked
so she could follow her departed brother:
it leads to a cavern filled with fire,
eternal furnace, echo-chamber of grieving Isis' cry:
no god, transfigured soul, or dead man dare pass here.

The secret road through the land of Sokar and the dead,
tunnel to the supreme grave chamber, Ra's towing down it
— no god, spirit or man goes this road:
it's a hellmouth tongued with the fire of Isis' cry
which burns like a cobra's bite.

Wat s2tat nt Jmh2t,[1] *st2a nt2r pn h2r.s: wnn.s h4r(t) bwt Nhs, rwty jmntt.*

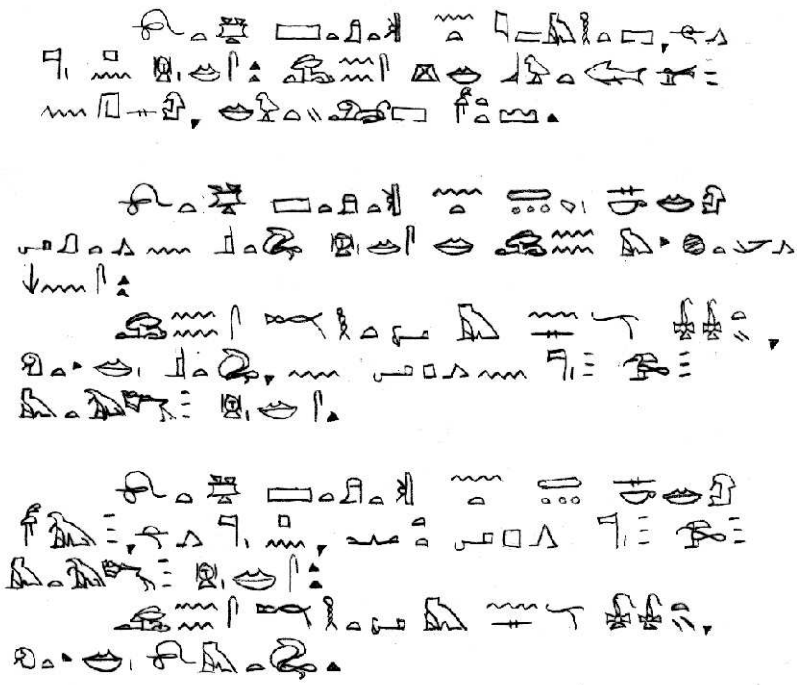
Wat s2tat nt ta Skr a2t.n Ast h2r.s r wnn m-h3t sn.s:
wnn.s mh2t m ns sd2ty, tpt-r Ast, n a2pj.n nt2rw, ah3w, mwtw h2r.s.

Wat s2tat nt ta Skr jmntyw, sta2w nt2r pn, jwtt apj{p} nt2rw ah3w mwtw h2r.s:
wnn.s mh2t m ns sd2ty, tpt-r n(t) wam{m}t.[2]

1 *Jmh2t*, originally a name for the Nile's imagined underground source, became a euphemism for the graveyard, which one might English as "spring of renewal."In this hour the normal spelling (maimed in Hour Four) is restored, and so I now give the word a more positive rendering.

2 *Wamt*, "she who roasts," is Isis in serpent form: so suggests the parallel line beginning *wnn.s* immediately above, and the standard use of a rearing cobra as a goddess determinative.

Hour Five



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Sudden light fills Sokar's underworld from the opening eyes of Ra:
a figure all of light, Ra steps forth from the chrysalis that hid him,
Ra emerges from the serpent—
Horus replaces Osiris—
life comes out of death.

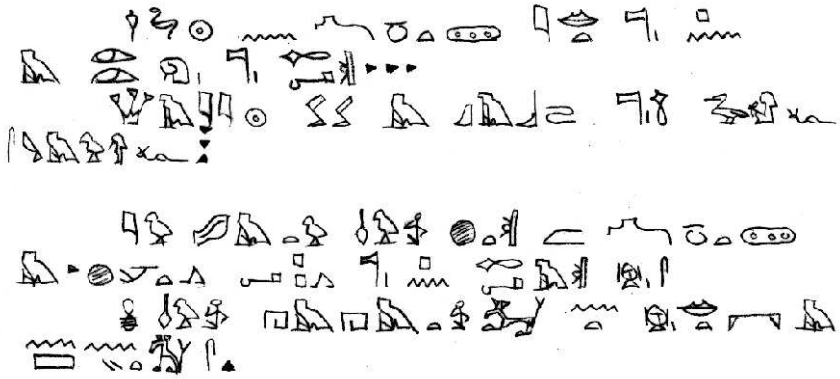
A sound is heard in this dark place after Ra's moved on,
a sound not like the sound of anything,
but not unlike Seth uttering thunder
from a stormsky in frustrated rage

H2d2 n nwt jryt nt2r pn m jrty tp nt2r a2a—
h2ay rdwy(.fy) m qab nt2r a2a saw.f ss2mw.f![1]

Jw sd2m.tw h3rw h3t m nwt tn m-h3t a2pp nt2r pn a2a h2r.s{n},
my h3rw hmhmt nt h2rt m ns2njt.s.

[1] Literally: "A brightness (comes) to the underworld of this god (Sokar) from the eyes in the head of a great god (Ra-Horus); a shining of legs (emerging) from the belly of the great god (Time-Serpent, Kepri) who kept his (Osiris') form."

Hour Five



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Introduction

The towing of Ra along the right paths through Hell, over the top of "The Secret Cave of Sokar Whose Throne Is a Grave Mound:"

it's an image unseen, never yet glimpsed, the occult form of this land that holds the corpse of Osiris.

Those who are one with Ra hear him calling out in Osiris' direction.

The gate of this city of the silent is called "Here Pause the Gods,"

the name of the cavern itself is "The Farthest West,"

the name of this hour of the night that guides great Ra is "Standing in Her Boat She Leads Him."

Here are the secret roads down to the World of the Dead, the gates that open on its hidden center, the holy locus, Sokar's land,

where the physical body is reduced to dry bone and embalmed flesh, the rudimental forms of human existence, the hard kernel of identity:

know the *bas* who inhabit this part of hell, know the secret names of their actions in this hour

— matters unknown, unseen, unglimpsed by Ra-Horus himself (for here he travels blind).

These things actually take place, exactly as depicted here, in the hidden deep of hell, its ultimate secret south.

Whoever knows these things, his *ba* will be content as Sokar is content, the flint knives of demon girls will never touch his mummy. Offerings will never fail at his tomb in the world above.

St2aw nt2r pn a2a h2r wawt maa2wt nt Dwat m h2ry "Qrrt S2tat nt Skr h2ry S2a2j.f:"

n ma(w), n ptr(w) ss2mw pn s2ta n ta h4ry h2a2w nt2r pn.

Jw jmyw nt2r pn, sd2m.sn h3rw Ra2 d2wj.f r haw nt2r pn.

Rn n sba nt njwt tn "A2h2a2 Nt2rw," rn n qrrt nt2r pn "Jmntt,"

rn n wnwt tn nt grh2 ss2mt nt2r pn a2a "Ss2mt h2ryt-jb Wja.s."

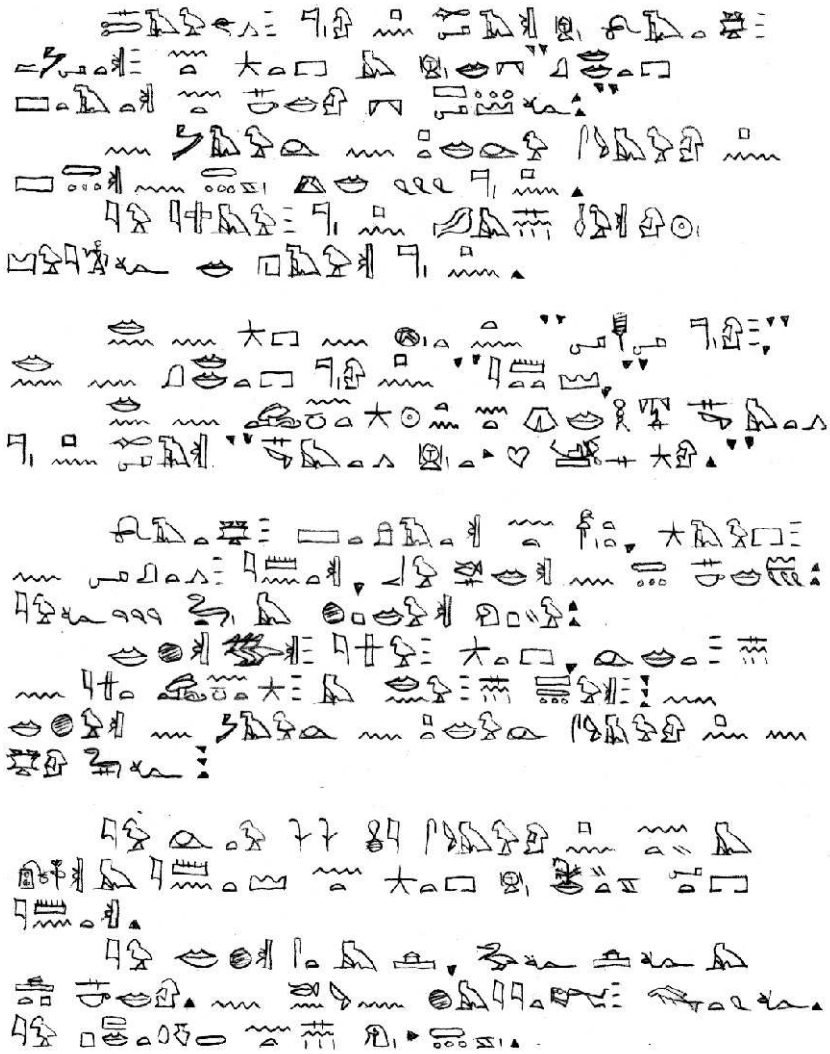
Wawt s2tawt nt jmntt, sbaw n a2qt jmnt, bw dsr n ta Skr: jwf d2t m h3prw tpy(w):

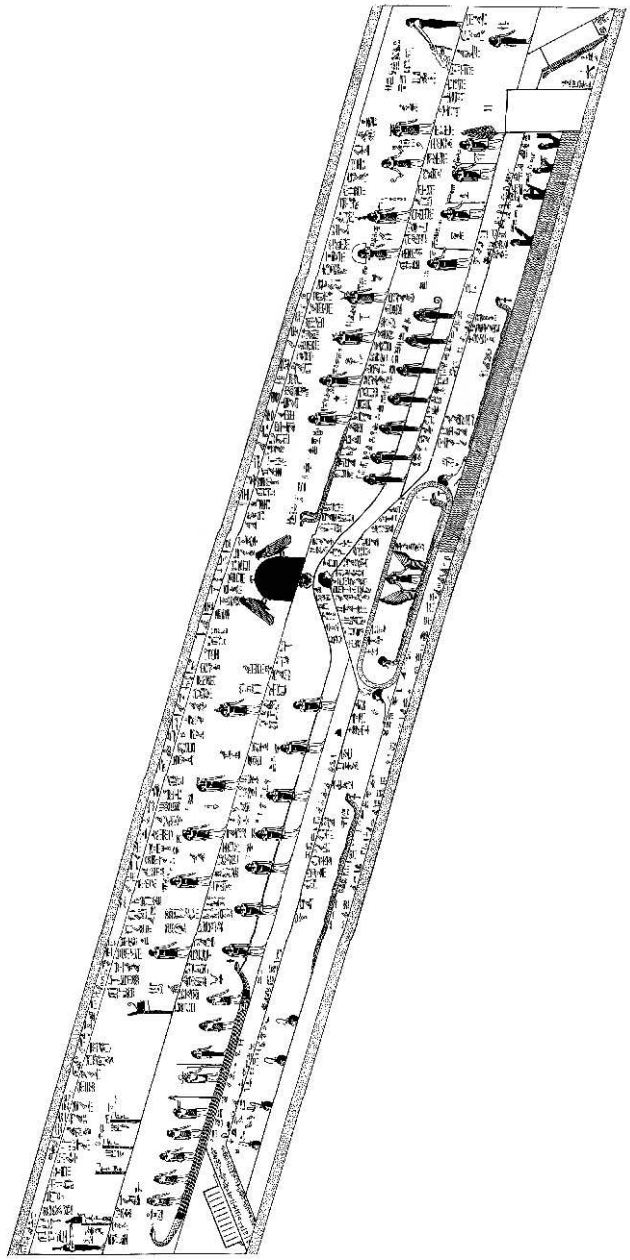
rh3 baw jmyw dwat, jrywt.sn n jmyt wnwt m rnw.sn s2taw! N{t} rh3(w), n ma(w), n ptr(w) ss2mw pn n H2r d2s.f!

Jw jrj.tw nn my ss2mw pn nty m ss2 m jmntt nt Dwat h2r rsyt a2t jmnt.

Jw rh3 st m h2tp, ba.f h2tp.f m h2tp Skr. N dn.n h3mywt h4at.f. Jw ph4rt ntsn tp-ta.

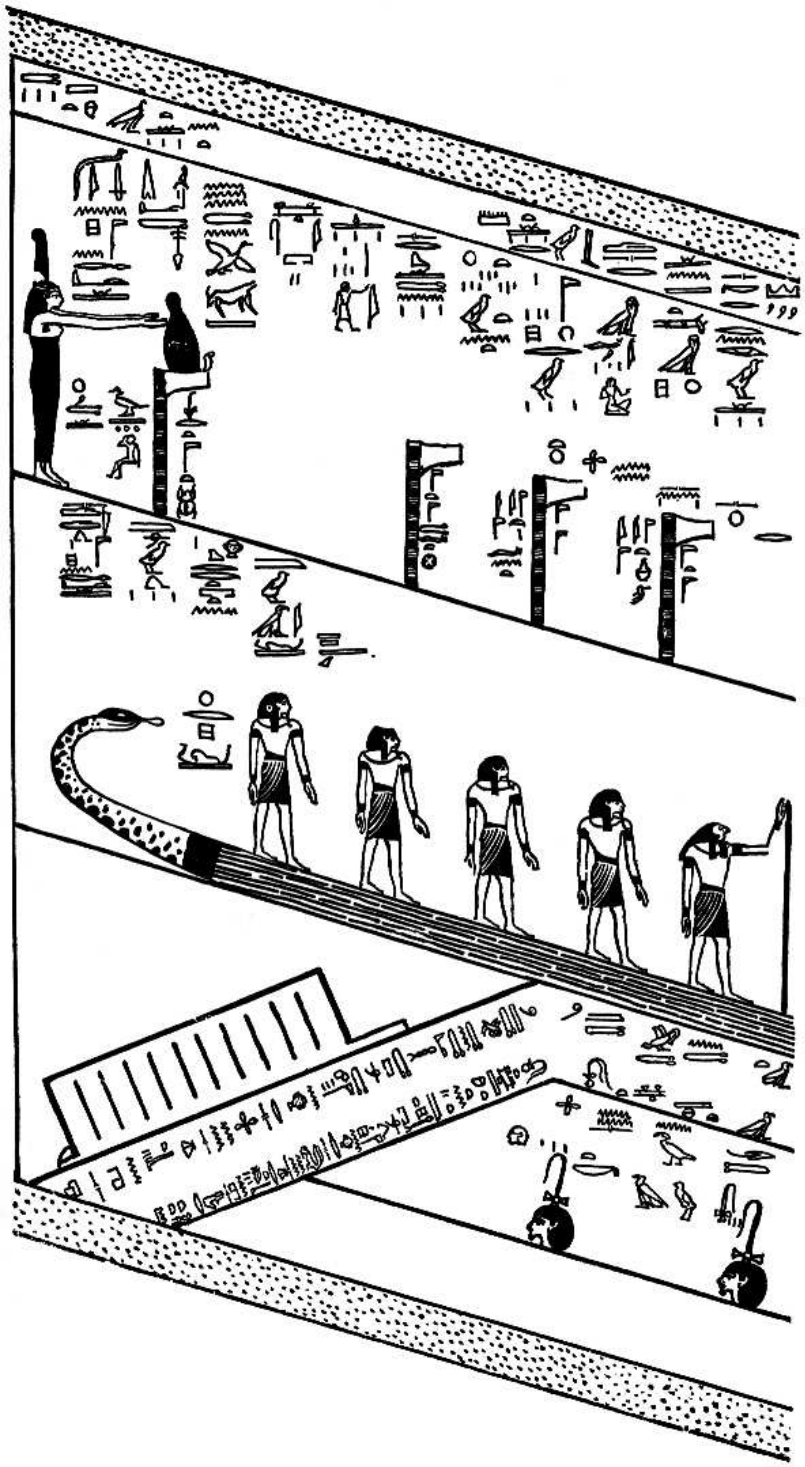
Hour Five





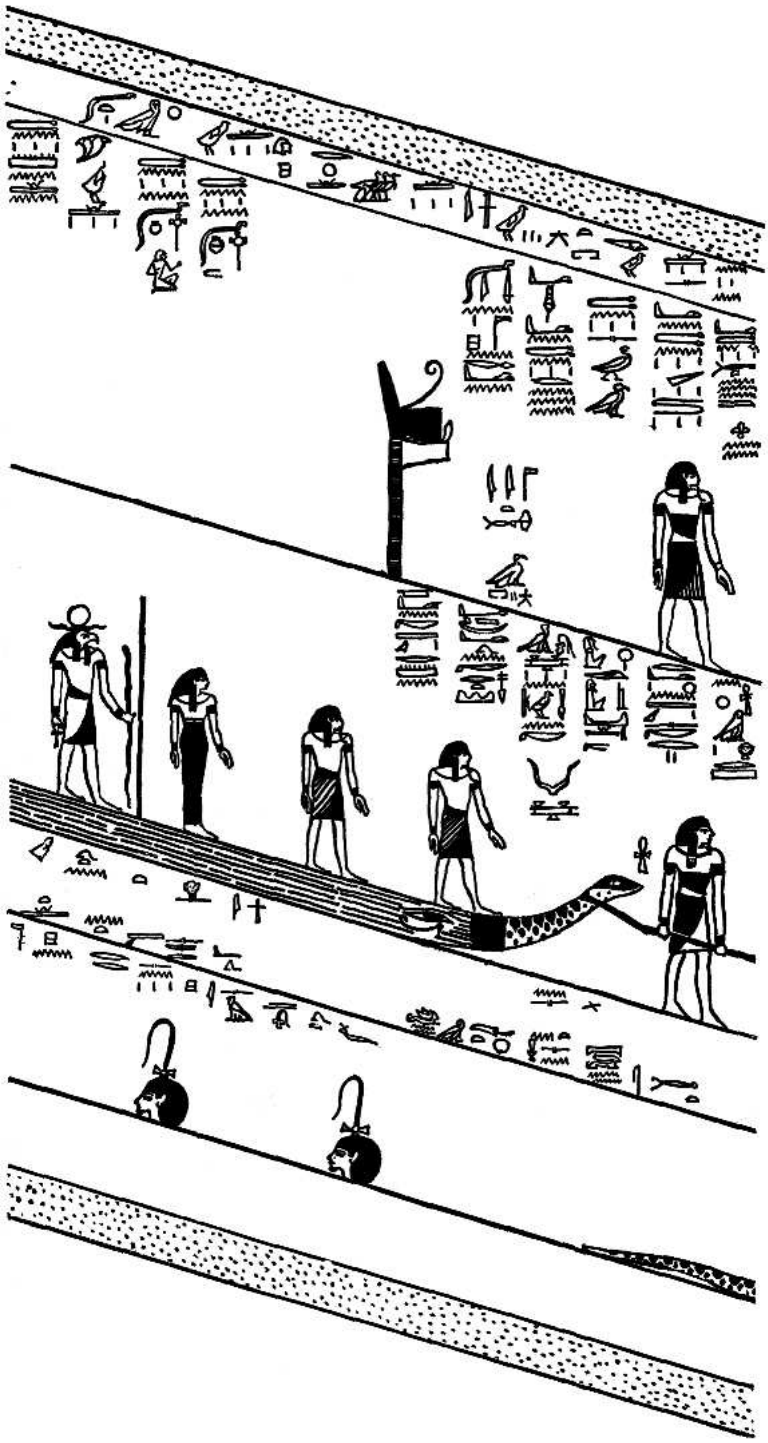
Complete Image of the Hour

Hour Five



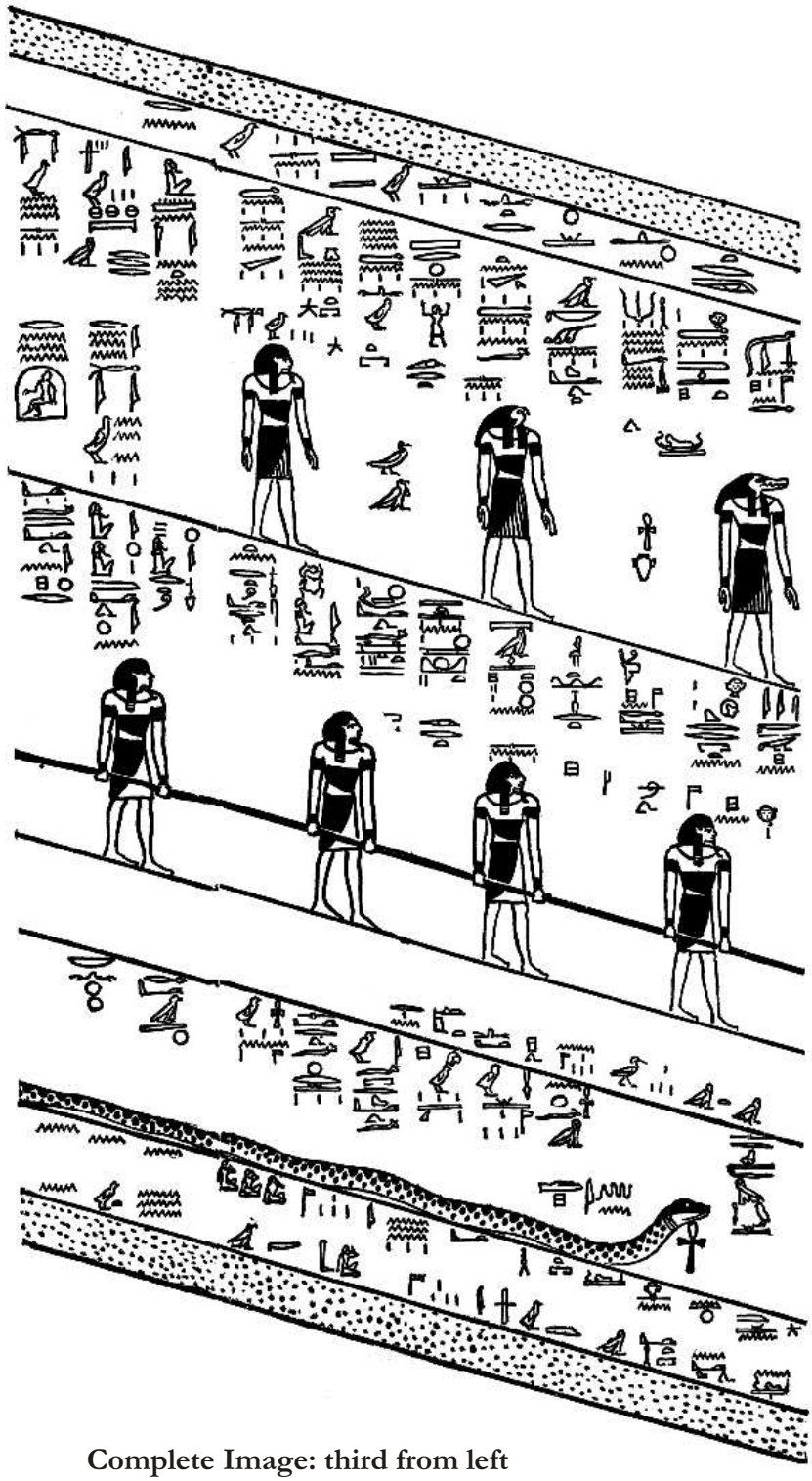
Complete Image: far left

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

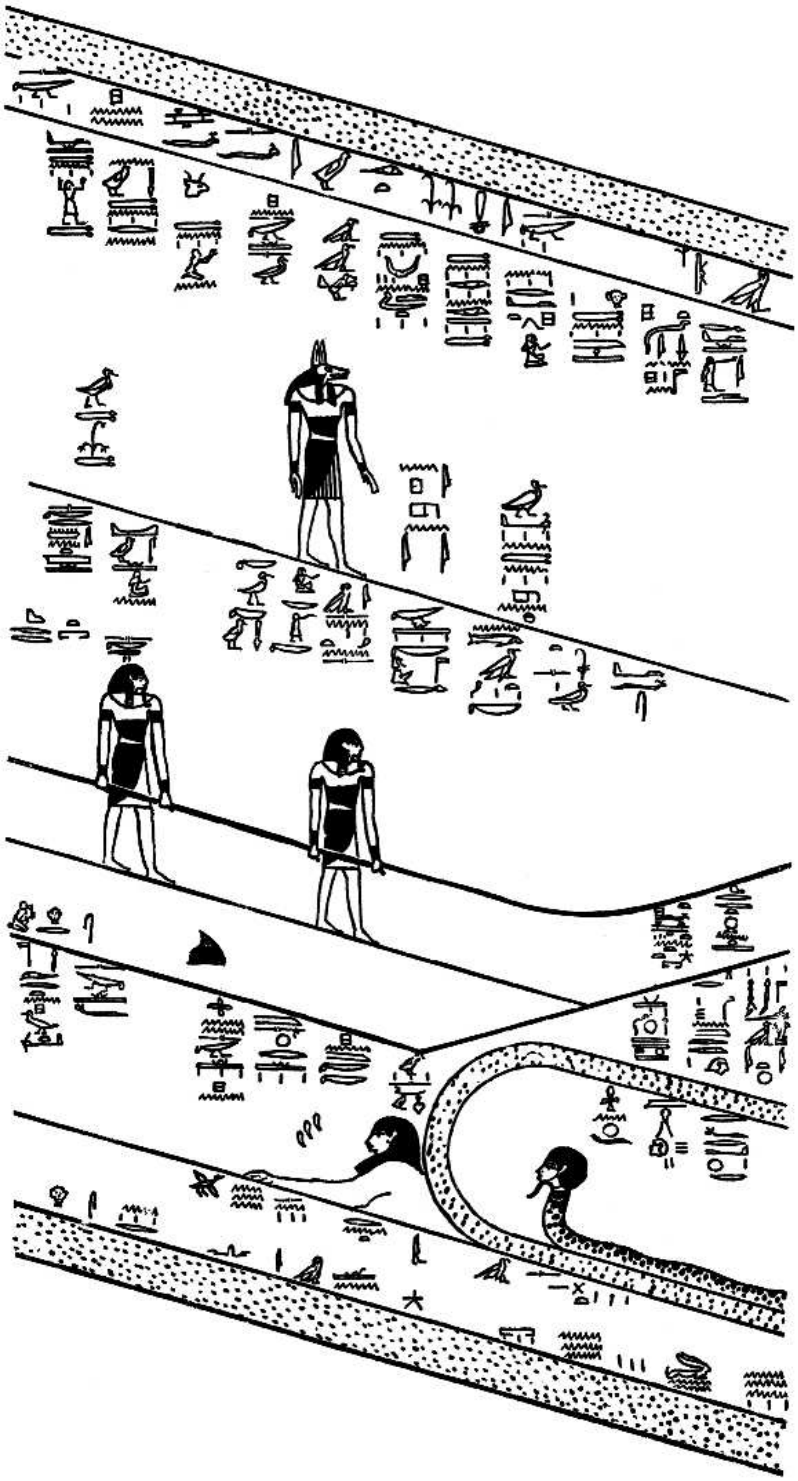


Complete Image: second from left

Hour Five

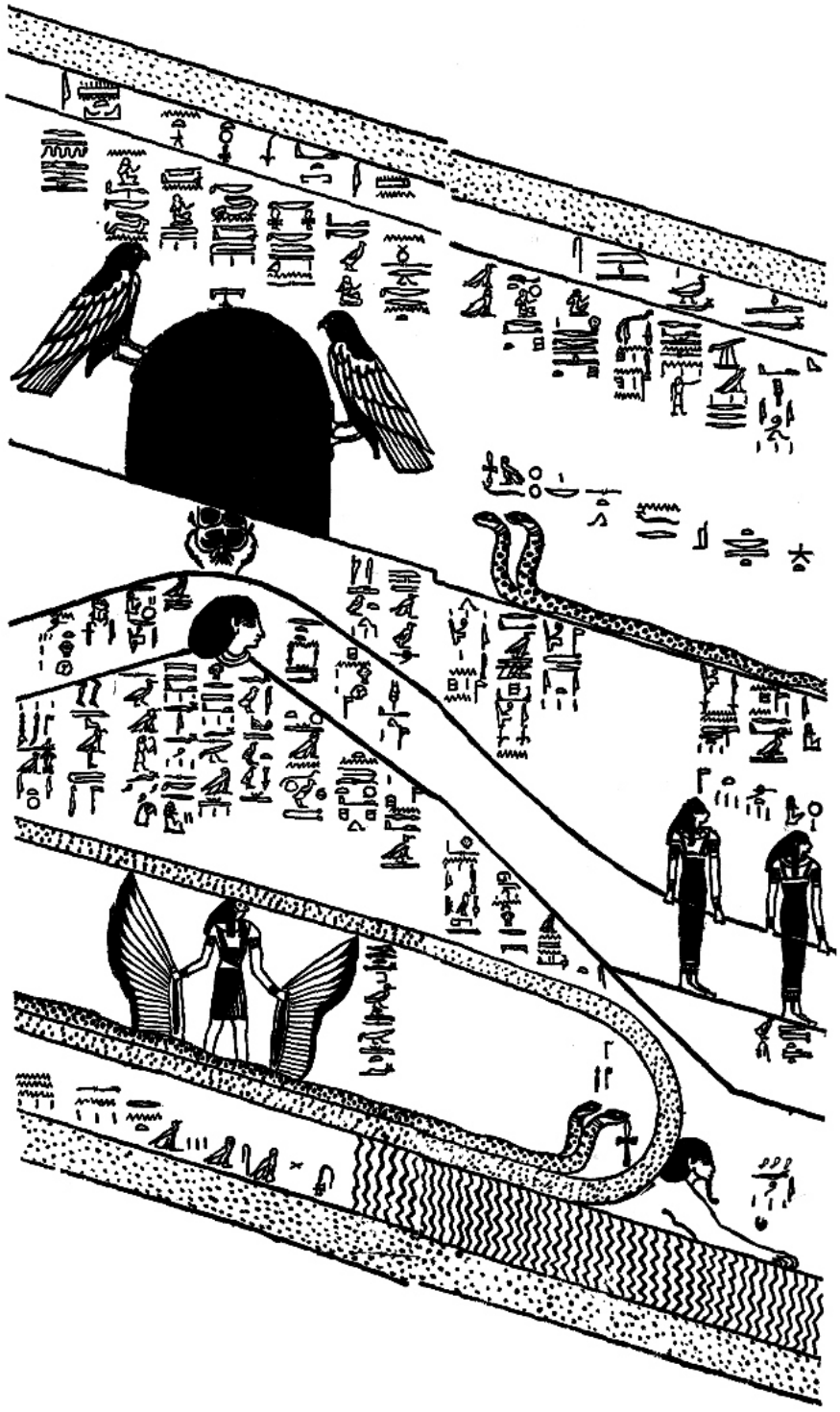


Complete Image: third from left



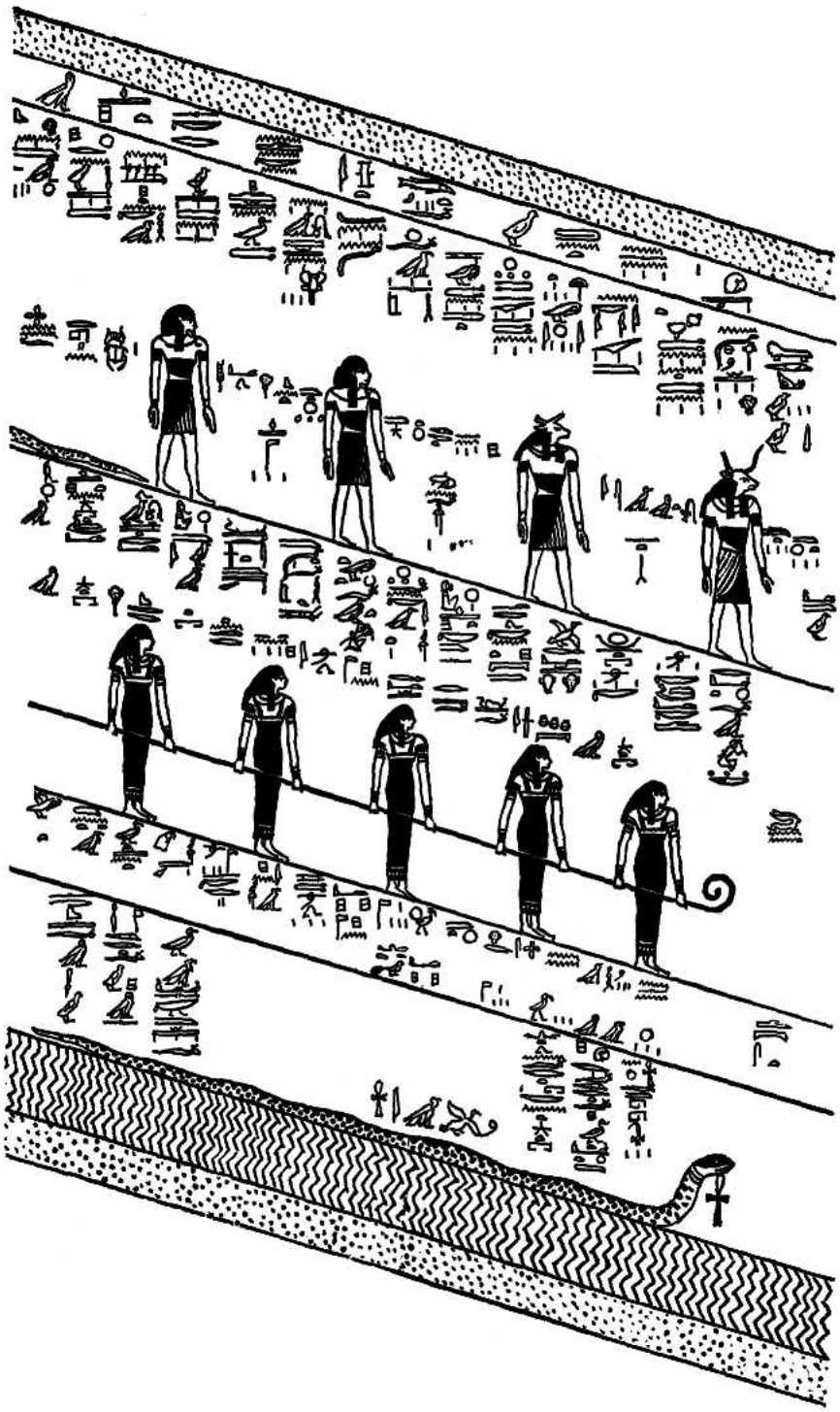
Complete Image: center left

Hour Five



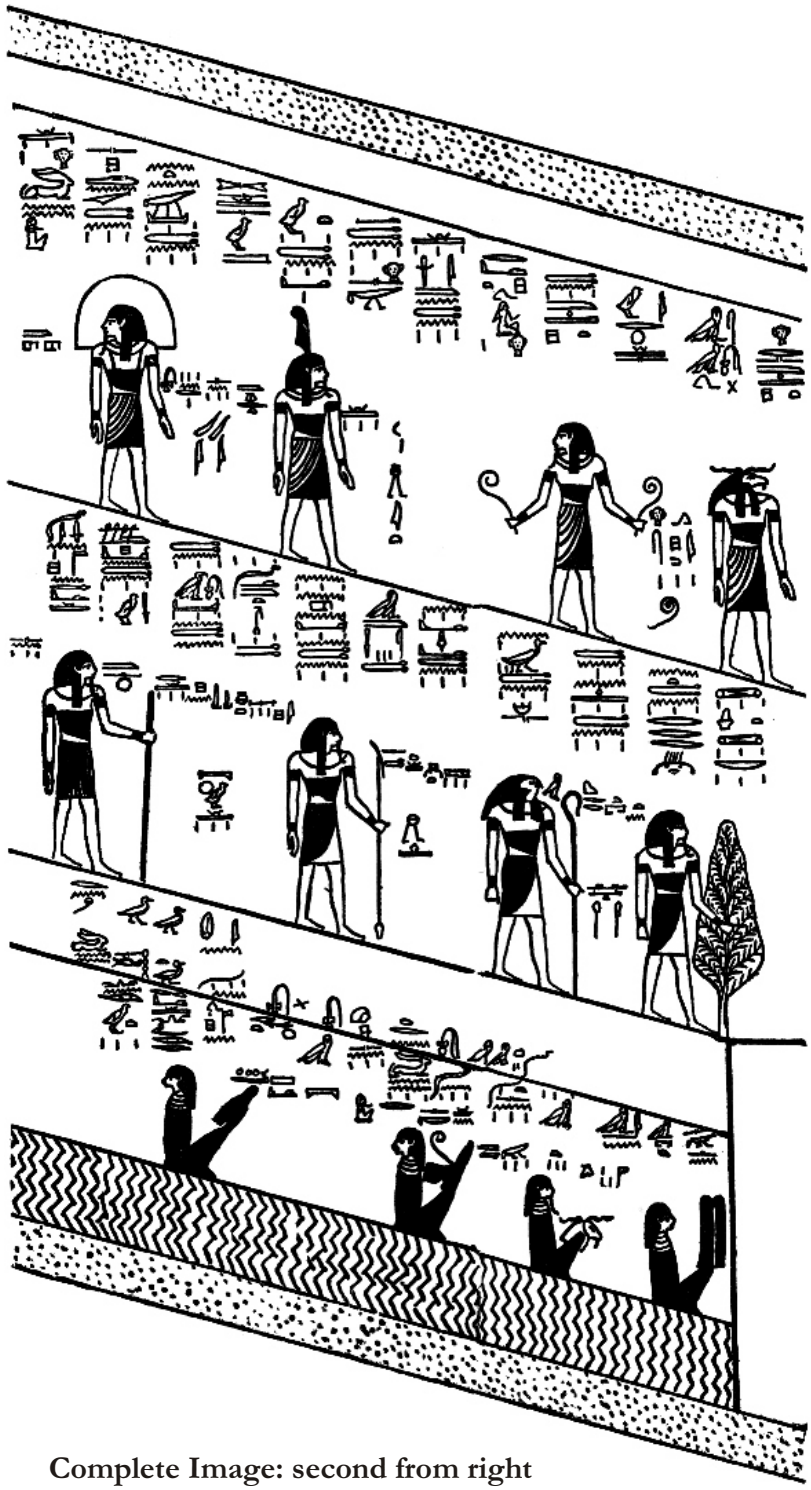
Complete Image: center right

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

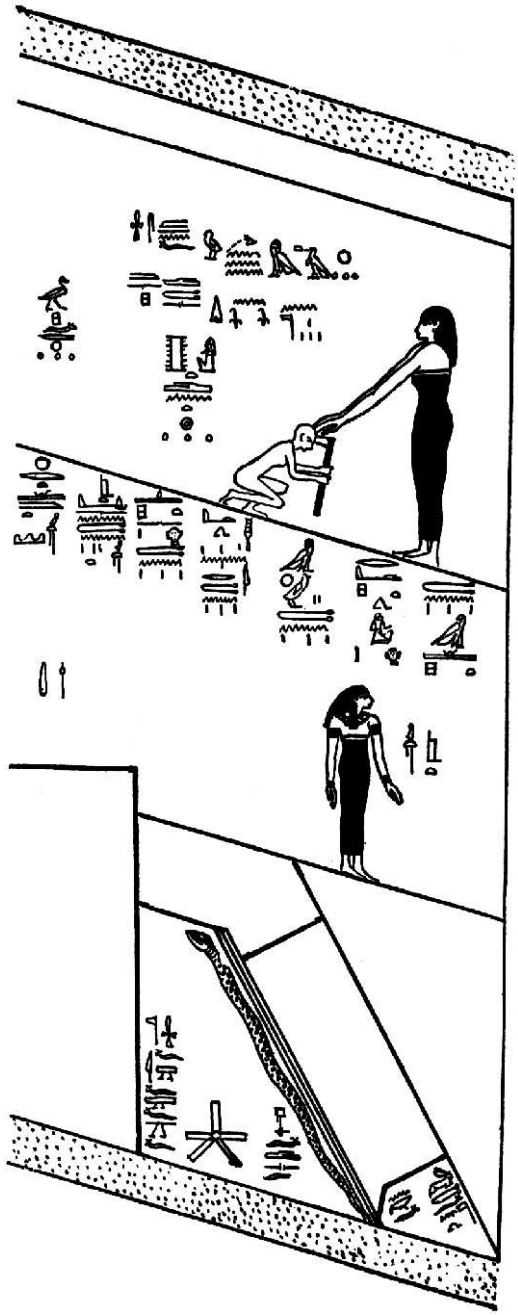


Complete Image: third from right

Hour Five

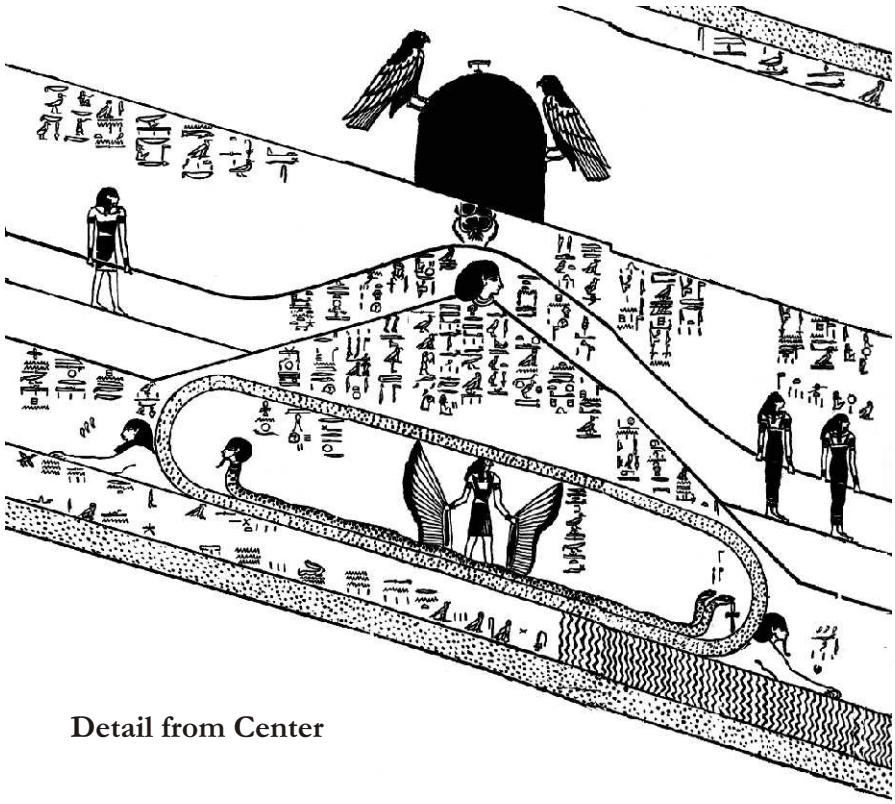


Complete Image: second from right



Complete Image: far right

Hour Five



Detail from Center

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Complete Image of the Hour

The three registers shown are not three successive sections of a road, but three views of the same road. The top register shows the center of Hell as seen from afar, with the tomb of Osiris in the distance. The second level has brought us much closer, and we discern that the tomb is actually an enormous pyramid. Finally, in the lowest register, we see a cross-section of the burial chamber. The actual road is indicated by the pathway that begins with the open gate at the lower left of the bottom register, passes through the center of the pyramid, and ends at the lower right with the gate guarded by a serpent.

The Ennead

West, give me your hand . . .

Breathe, august pantheon . . .

This group ends, at far left, with a goddess who represents the west, standing, arms raised, crowned with a *Maat* feather. She faces nine temple pennants on their poles (Budge's copy shows only five of these.) These schematic flags on poles are the ideogram for "god." The crown of lower or northern Egypt on the pennant at the far right, taken with the upper Egyptian crown at the other end of the group, indicates that this is a complete muster of Egypt's major deities.

This point is also made by the number nine, which in Egyptian can stand for "totality" — whence the term Ennead, "group of nine," for the high pantheon. The logic is this: nine is thrice three, and three is the number symbolic of "many." Many times many equals all. The use of the number nine as the canonical number of major gods goes back to the the Old Kingdom and the town of Heliopolis, where the original nine deities were established as Atum and the three generations descended from him.

The gods represented here by flags are the Heliopolitan Ennead with a few important modifications. The Heliopolitan series begins when Atum arises from Nun, the primaeval chaos-waters. (Nun is not counted among the nine). Here the role of Nun is taken by Hathor (mistress of the graveyard) pregnant with Ra — this is the female figure with arms raised at the far left. Then comes the first pennant, labeled Kepri. This is a name for Ra in his aspect of newborn or dawning sun. Here Ra replaces Atum as the head of the pantheon.

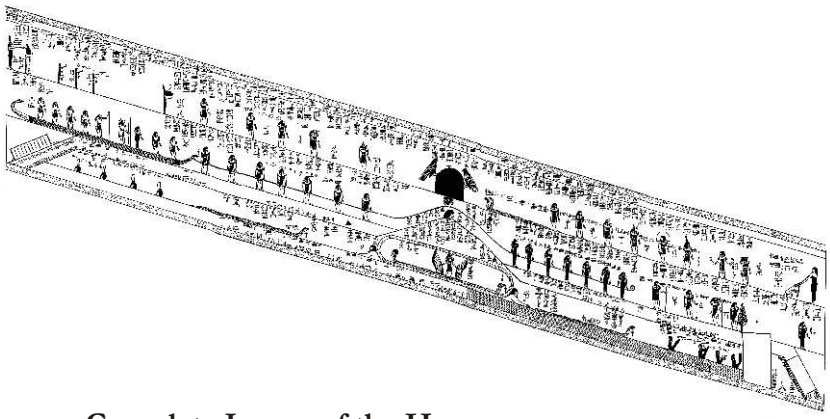
We then proceed along orthodox Heliopolitan lines. Ra-Kepri begets Shu (Air) and Tefnut (Moisture), who in turn beget Geb (earth) and Nut (sky).

According to Heliopolis, these in turn give birth to Osiris, Isis, Nephthys and Seth, but here Seth is replaced by the underworld aspect of Horus. This is a matter of courtesy to Osiris, whose corpse we now approach.

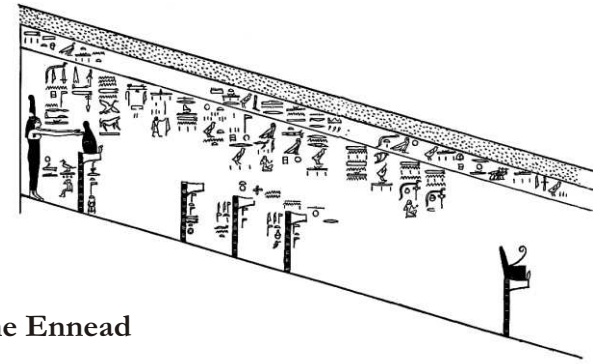
The meaning of this scene is not to set up a rival theology, but to indicate that the sun's rise both recapitulates and renews the original creation.

Though all the figures in this hour are shown facing in the correct direction, the direction of Ra's journey, I have analysed this group from back to front (left to right) to better clarify the genealogy involved.

Hour Five



Complete Image of the Hour



The Ennead

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

This is the arrangement of the nine supreme gods in hell:

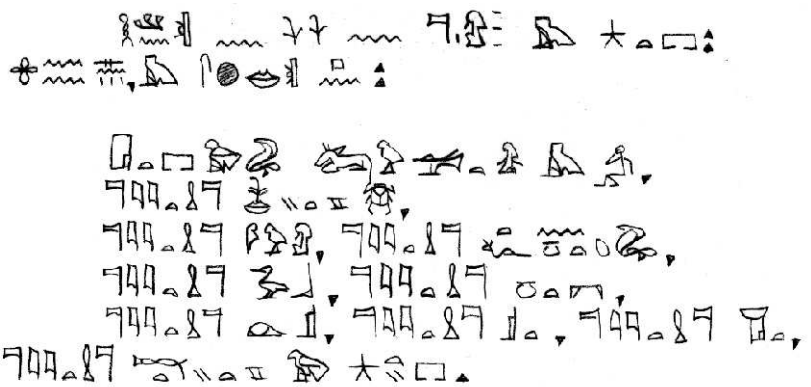
Hathor great with the child Ra,
the southernmost standard which is Kepri's,
the standards of his offspring Shu and Tefnut,
the standards of their offspring Geb and Nut,
the standards of their offspring Osiris, Isis, Nepthys and Underworld Horus,
whose standard is the northernmost of these.

H2n{w}{p}n nn n ntt2rw m dwat: wnn.sn, m sh3r pn.

H2wt-H2r Jwrt[1] *(m) H4rd,*
Nt2ryt rsyt H3prj,
Nt2ryt S2w, Nt2ryt Tfnt,
Nt2ryt Gb, Nt2ryt Nwt,
Nt2ryt Wsjr, Nt2ryt Ast, Nt2ryt Nbt-H2wt, Nt2ryt Mh2yt H2r-Dwaty.

[1] The enigmatic writing of this name is particularly delphic: *Ra2* (=*H2r*) + *h2a2w* ("body") + *t2* (= *t*) + *wr* +*ta* gives us *H2r-h2a2w-t2* (honorific transposition) *wr-ta,* and so the name as I have transliterated it.

Hour Five



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Waters of Rebirth

Your waters, they don't sink. Your river, it doesn't go dry.

The presence of water in the desert of Sokar's land is surprising, but it does have its own logic. Sokar's realm is sandy and dry because it is like the desert's edge where the Egyptians buried their dead. However, it is also a place of water because that is an essential part of the symbolism of death.

On the cosmic level, water symbolizes the latent, formless potential of existence. It is the precondition, the substance and substratum of creation: hence the role of floods and oceans as the setting for cosmic creation myths. The same symbolism is operant on the individual level: dissolution of one's separate identity in the waters of the underworld is an indispensible prelude to rebirth and reintegration into the cycle of existence. We see this in the *Aeneid* (6: 703 *ff.*) where the soul must drink forgetfullness from the waters of Lethe before it can proceed to reincarnation. The individual must lose the definition and identity acquired in the course of his historical existence, be returned to pure potential, in order to be born anew. The same idea is in play in Christian baptism, which washes away "sin" (the marks and stains left by temporal existence,) so that rebirth can take place.

Egyptian mythology preserves this symbolism in a purer form than we encounter in the Graeco-Roman world, where it is already tainted by misgivings about physical existence. For the Egyptian, a blessed death entailed the watery dissolution of the old persona, on the analogy of the buried seed. Watered, the seed loses the shell that defined it and becomes a new plant. This process underlies one of the phases of Osiris' career: he is drowned in the Nile, dismembered (his old identity is dismantled), and finally he returns to life through Horus.

The first figure (going right to left), "Primordial One of the Underground Counter-Sky," has a crocodile head appropriate to his watery work.

"Living Heart" has a falcon head, suggesting Horus who revives Osiris.

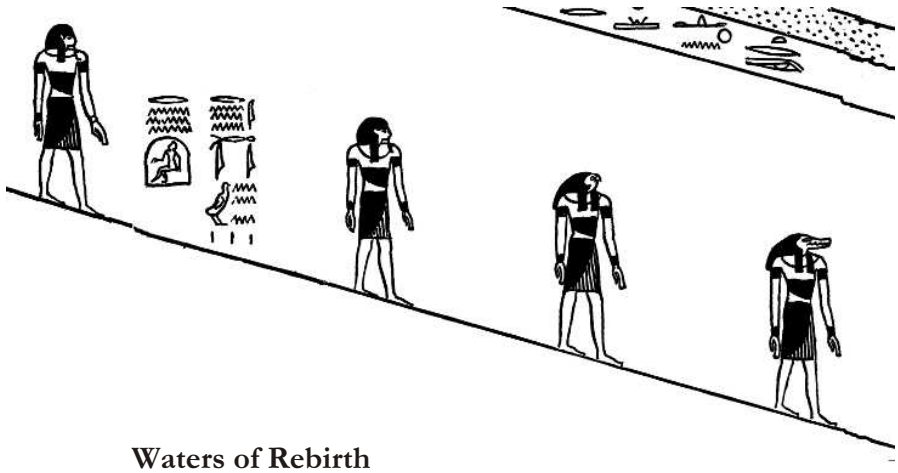
The final two figures, "Shore Guardian" and "Chief of the Pool of Rebirth," are human in form: the latter has an interesting determinative: a child in a circle of pouring and purifying water.

These are the spirits in charge of the pool of the drowned in deepest Hell. Their mission: the safe passage of the sun's boat over their waters.

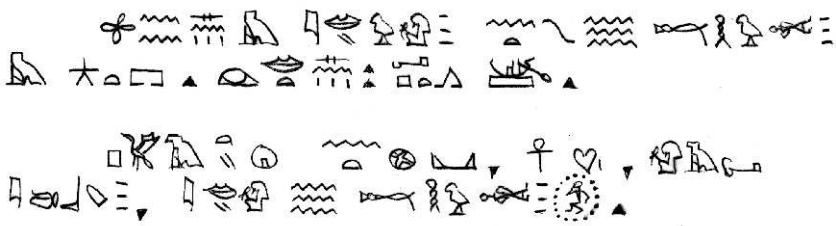
Wnn.sn m jryw nt mhyw m dwt. Jrjt.sn: a2pjt wja.

Pawty Nwt, A2nh3 Jb, Saw Jdbw, Jry Mw Mh2w.

Hour Five



Waters of Rebirth



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Isis and Nephthys on the Tomb

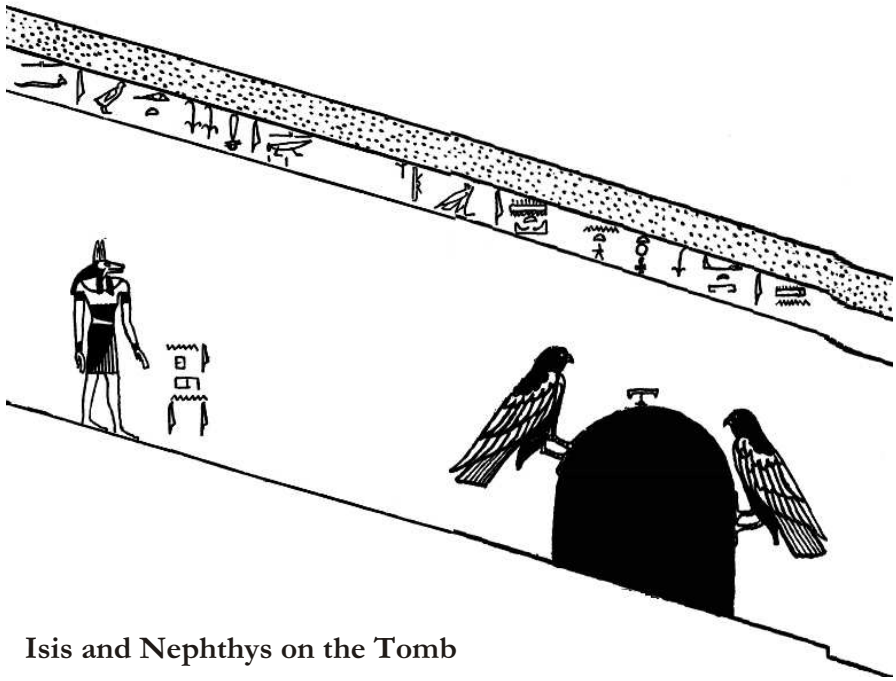
Guard your box, Isis and Nephthys . . .

At the left of this scene stands "Anubis of the Coffin." At the center of the composition is the gravemound (which in Egypt would have been a sand-heap). Entirely black, it has at its top the hieroglyph for "Night." Perched on either side of the grave are birds labeled "Isis" and Nephthys."

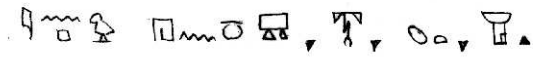
The lamentation of Isis and Nephthys, the *stabat mater* of ancient Egypt, typically shows the two goddesses in the form of kites perched by the body of Osiris. These carrion birds, which circle a corpse uttering their mournful cries, seemed to the Egyptians the perfect emblems of grief.

Jnpw hnw, grh2, Ast, Nbt-H2wt.

Hour Five



Isis and Nephthys on the Tomb



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Two Headed Serpent

O holy serpent, greet me with a bow,
lower your heads, withdraw your coilings, open the passage to me!

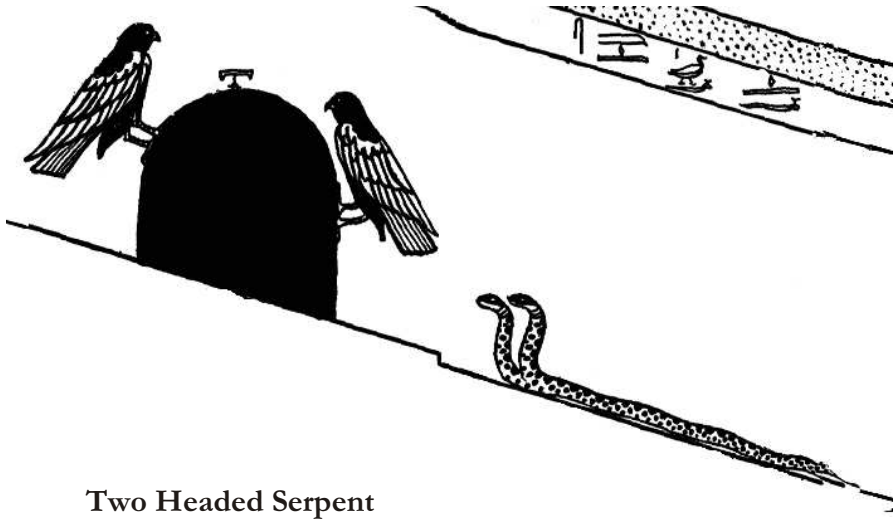
This creature is probably the *ka* of Osiris, and may be identical with the arch-ka *Neheb-Kaw* of the previous hour.

He lives by hearing Ra's voice each night, and never has he gone to any other place in hell.

His station is by the Gravemound of Becoming.

A2nh3.f m h3rw Ra2 ra2 nb, jwty jw.n.f r st nbt nt Dwat. Wnn.f r hn H3prj.

Hour Five



Two Headed Serpent

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Punishers

You butchers at your blocks who stand there
overpowering the sinful dead . . .

First we have eight figures which are labeled (right to left):

"That Great Ba in Charge of the Dead," a ram-headed spirit. The image depends on the pun "*ba,*" which means either "Ram" or "Ghost;"

"Turns and Lasso's," holding in each hand the ideogram for "rope;"

"Sees that Justice is Done," with the ostrich feather of *Maat* ("Truth") on his head;

"Horned," this figure has a half-circle around his head. Budge plausibly identified this as the top of the fan with is the ideogram for "Shadow." Perhaps it is equally well explained as a distortion of horns, which would suggest power and authority.

"Swallower," with a cow's head. A cow's head is the main part of the ideogram for "to swallow."

"Osiris-Staff," with a bull's head; staves and bulls are both suggestive of rule.

"Whom the Dead Fear," with a cat's head. (Budge's version has a human head for this figure). The cats of ancient Egypt were renowned for their hostility to snakes, and so cat-headed demons appear frequently in the underworld as opponents of wicked spirits.

"Sacrificer to the Gods," with no special attributes.

These stand overpowering the dead in Hell. Their daily task is to incinerate the corpses with fire that blasts from their mouths.

At the far right we have a female figure holding a tiny male trying to remove an axe from his head (the ideogram for enemy). She completes this group, and her name is "Attacks and Hacks Up the Dead." Her superscription reads:

Who knows her passes by her in peace. She drinks the blood of the dead and eats the horrid meat these gods roast for her.

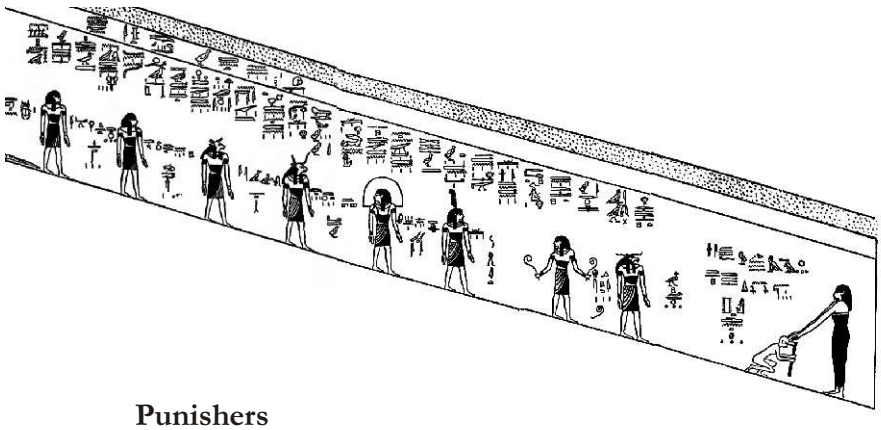
Ntsn a2h2a2(w) h2r qnjt mwtw m Dwat. Jrjt sn pw, samt h4awt mwtw m hhw n r.sn m h4rt-hrw.

Ba Pf Jry Mwtw, A2nn h2r Sph2{t}, Jnj Maa2t, A2by, A2m, Mst, Snd2 n.f Jmntyw, (Rdj) H2tp Nt2rw.

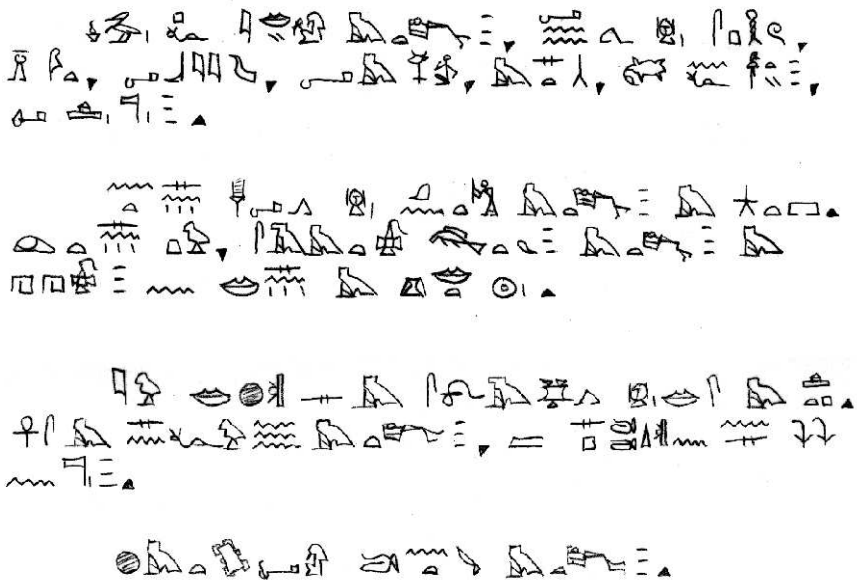
Jw rh3.s m swa h2r.s m h2tp. A2nh3.s m snfw mwtw, m spdd(w).n n.s nn n nt2rw.

H2mjt, dnt Mwtw.

Hour Five



Punishers



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Middle Register

Sun Boat and Those Who Tow It.

When Ra enters Hell in peace, when Ra's road smooths and widens before him,
he comes in his underground boat, which is his body . . .

The boat has the same crew as in the previous hour, with the single difference that the steersman is back (his tiller, however, is not). Their names are not listed. The subterranean boat, "Life of all *Bas,*" with its two serpent heads, is not only the vehicle but the embodiment of Ra. Thus it bears a name appropriate to Ra, who is every soul's hope of rebirth.

The great god travels on, towed over that gravemound in his subterranean ship named "Life of All *Bas*."

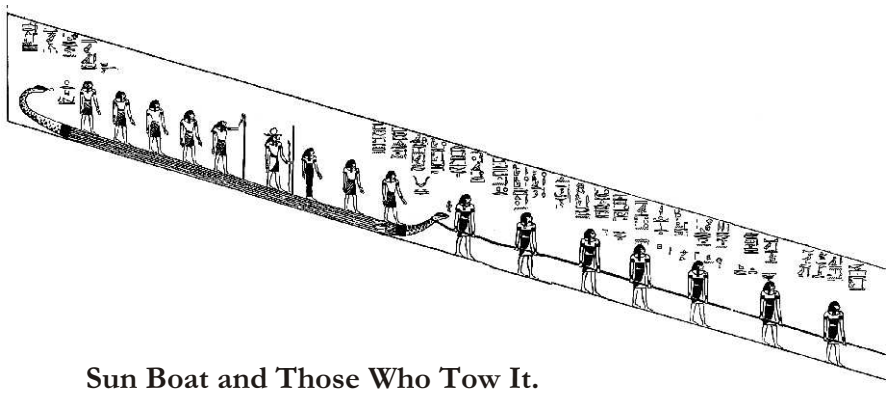
The seven who tow have the superscription:

Infernal spirits: their task is to draw the great god Ra over Sokar's cave.

Sqdd nt2r pn a2a m st2aw h2r qrrt tn m wja.f jmy-ta "A2nh3 Baw."

Nt2rw Dwatyw. Jrjt.sn pw st2a nt2r pn h2r qrrt Skr.

Hour Five



Sun Boat and Those Who Tow It.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Kepri

Kepri, lord of beginning and becoming,
he'll reach out a hand to pull Ra *through . . .*

May Isis watch over your form, great Sokar, may she tend your corpse!
She is your body's guardian.

In myth, Isis is the bereaved widow who lays out and watches over the corpse of Osiris. In a startling extension of this role as protectress, she is here identified with the burial mound: her head is shown at the top of it.

The role of mistress of the graveyard, the tomb incarnate, womb of rebirth, would ordinarily be played by Hathor. But since here we are anticipating a "resurrection" of Osiris through the birth of his son Horus (= Ra), Horus' mother Isis is shown.

Kepri's "house," as the text has it, is the tomb itself, here shown as a black rounded form above the Isis-headed burial mound; Kepri emerges from his tomb upside-down because he facilitates the supreme inversion, the transformation of death into life.(See page 252 for a commentary on this image).

The text describes less the meaning than the placement of the two images:

Kepri will stand over this goddess, he'll command the land of Sokar every day.

It is Kepri in his house who straightens out the tow-rope above that cave

till Ra's hell-journey ends in rest.

Next to Isis' head appears the text descriptive of the pyramid's contents:

Corpse that belongs to Isis on Sokar's Gravemound

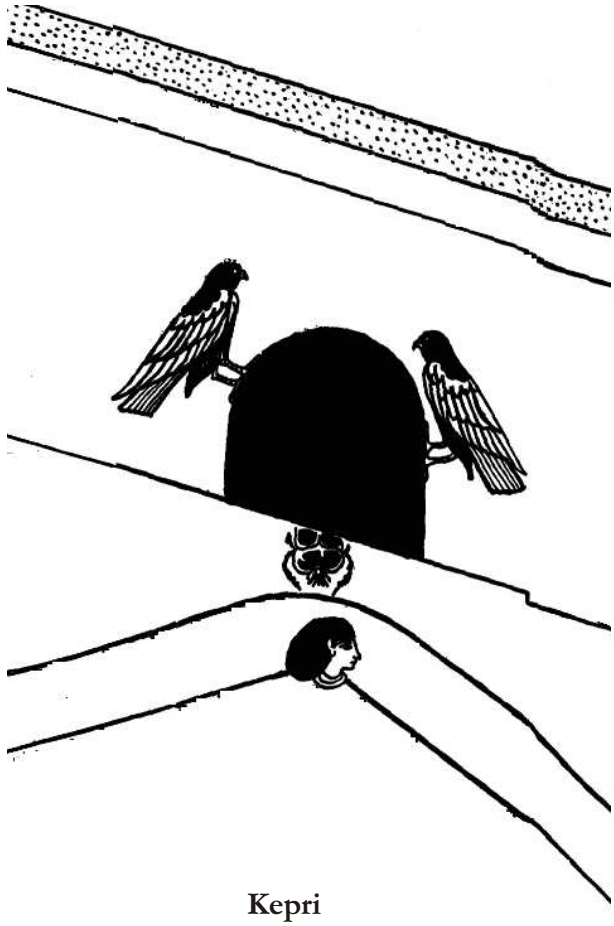
Sokar is typically represented as a pyramidal gravemound topped with a falcon's head. Here the bird head has been replaced by that of Isis. Isis is thus combined with Sokar to show that the grave is the womb from which her son Horus (=Ra) will be reborn.

A2h2a2 nt2r pn h2r tp nt2rt tn,
wd2-mdw.f m ta Skr ra2 nb.
Jn H3prj jmy pr.f maa2 nfrt n st2aw h2r tp qrrt tn
r h2tp.f, (H2r, h2r) wat nt Dwat.[1]

Jwf Ast h2ryt s2a2j Skr.

[1] Triple pun: the text has only the word *wat*, which does not yeild an intelligible phrase. However *wat*, the "road" ideogram, is also used for the name Horus (*H2r*), and this is identical in sound with the word for "upon" (*h2r*).

Hour Five



Kepri

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Towing Goddesses

The goddesses of the underworld say to Ra:
You will be towed forward, this thing shall come to pass . . .

Seven goddesses towing the sunboat.

Towed voyage of the great god Ra, his reception by these goddesses.

Goddesses who tow Ra in Hell over this cave: their task is to draw the great god's ship until it comes to rest,
this ship of his that sails the waters of Nun, hell's deep.

Sqdwt m st2ta jn h2m n nt2r pn a2a, ss2p jn nn n nt2rwt.

Nt2rwt st2awt Ra2 m Dwat h2r qrrt tn: jrjt.sn pw, st2aw nt2r pn a2a r h2tp.f, wja.f, jmy Nwn m Dwat.

Providers of Food

Take up your walking sticks,
O nobles of Osiris' inner court . . .

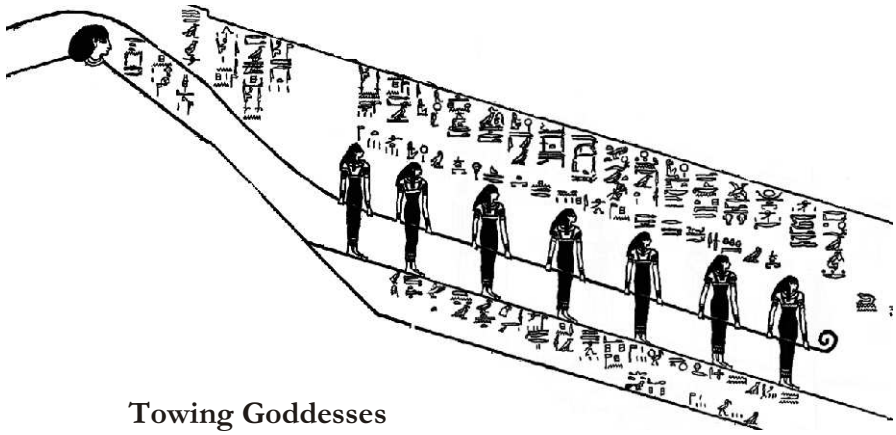
At far right stands "Western Isis" with no special attributes; "Commander," who seems to be standing by a tree, is actually holding in his hand an oversized ear of wheat; "Horus Ruling the Two Lands" has a falcon's head; "Bringer of Offerings" carries a *Djam* scepter: this is also a pastoral staff, and appears among grave goods or as an attribute of gods; "In Charge of the Rites" holds a simple, straight staff.

Here's how they look, this committee which brings the food eaten within this cave.

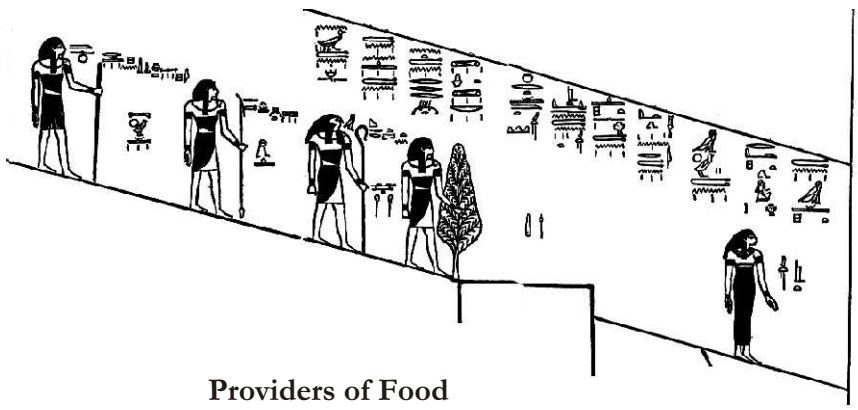
Wnn.sn m sh3r pn: d2ad2at pw snmt awt m qrrt tn.

Ast Jmntt, Wd2-Mdw, H2r Hqaty, Jnj H2tp(w), H2ry Jrw.

Hour Five



Towing Goddesses



Providers of Food

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Lower Register

Gate

The secret road to Sokar's land, the road Isis once walked . . .

The actual path of Ra through this region is shown in overview in the lowest register. It goes from gate to gate and passes "behind," that is, through the mound with the burial chamber.

This door is a blade that takes those who approach it.

Jt2j.f jw n mds.f.

Fire Spirits

. . . it leads to a cavern filled with fire,
eternal furnace, echo-chamber of grieving Isis' cry!

The illustration depends on an overly literal reading of an idiom: Isis' "cry" (*tepet er*) which fills the chamber with flame is literally "the head of the mouth", i.e., what emerges from (pokes its head out of) the mouth. Thus we have the four utterance-heads with braziers for hats.

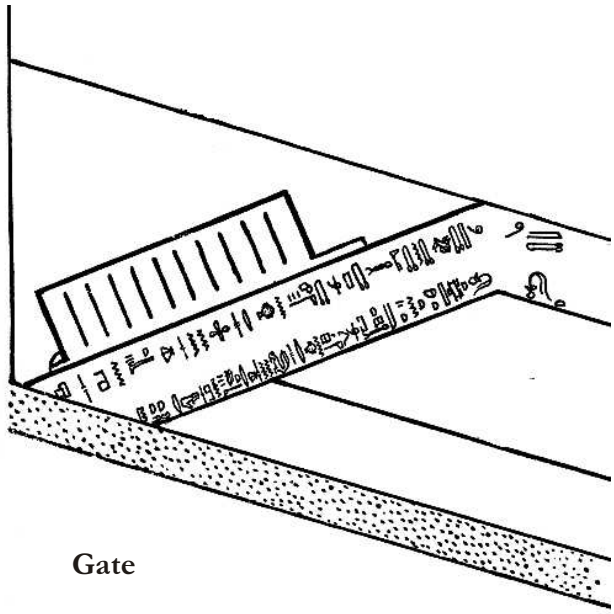
Fire heads.

These are behind Ra as he enters the cave: they burn the feet of approaching enemies.

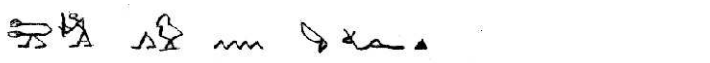
Tpw tkaw.

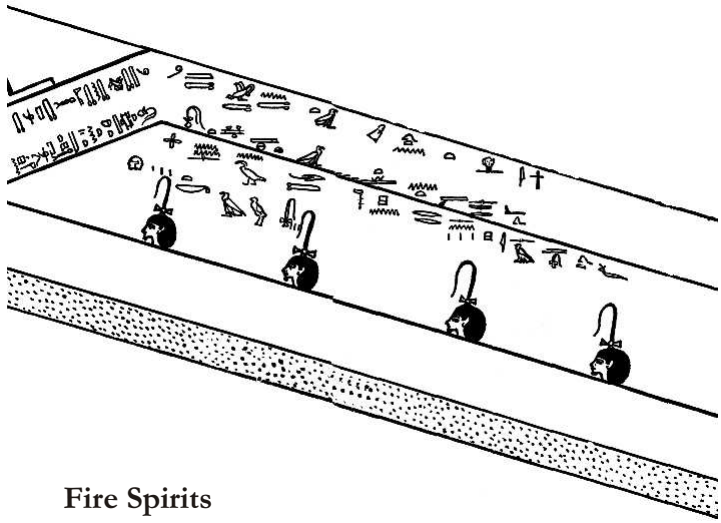
Wnn.sn m-h3t nt2r pn: jrjt.sn pw, samt nmtwt h3ftyw.f

Hour Five

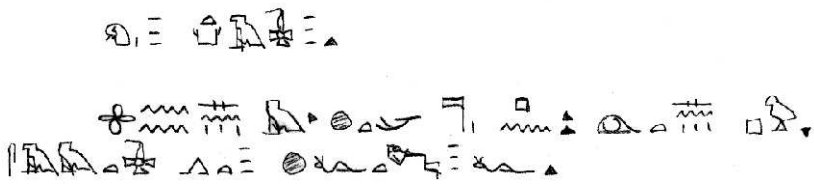


Gate





Fire Spirits



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Carrier of Prayers

A serpent with an *ank* at its head bears the name "Holy Head." In other versions he has a second, baboon head, directly above his serpent head. This is to indicate his dual nature as a creature of the daylit upper world and of the subterranean night-realm.

The petitions he carries are prayers for life beyond the grave (hence the *ank* he bears). He is appropriately shown here at the very brink of the cave: it is a visual representation of the idea that all the prayers and hopes of the living go with Ra as he enters his final trial.

This one lives by hearing the voices of the gods in the upper world: he is not confined to Hell, but goes in and out of it as he pleases, and brings to Ra the petitions of the living every day, without being seen.

D2sr Tp.

A2nh3.f m h3rw nt2rw tpyw ta. Jw.f a2q.f prj.f sa2r.f h3rwt a2nh3w n nt2r pn a2a ra2 nb, n(n) maa.

The Womb of the Earth

The womb, which is the underworld,
Kepri's vast egg, sarcophagus to Osiris . . .

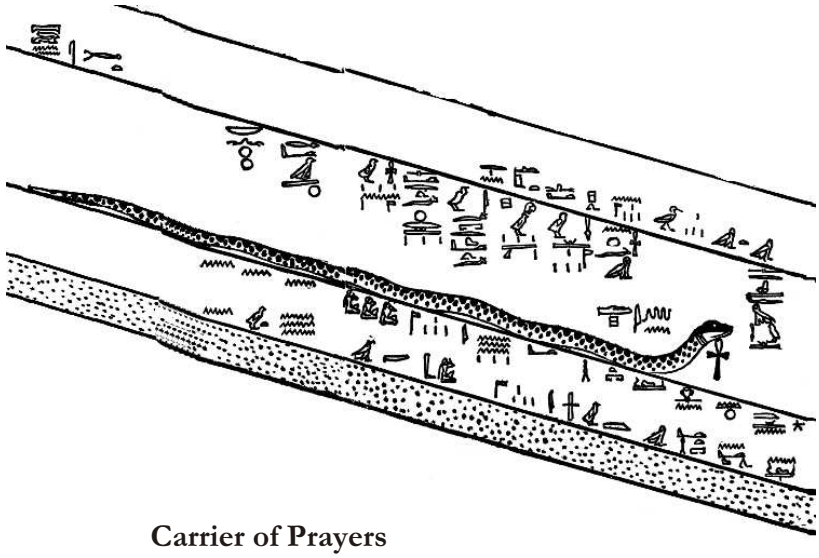
The center of this register, and the heart of the entire composition, is the gravemound with Isis' head. The tomb is her womb: in it Osiris is reborn in the person of his son Horus. This process is shown here as synonymous with the sun's nightly death (setting) and and resurrection (dawn).

Here is the body.

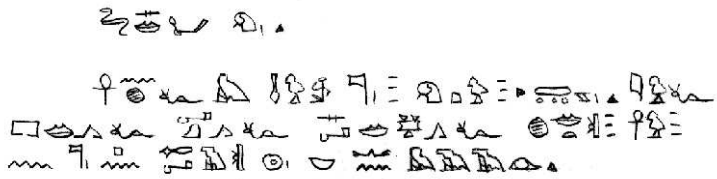
This utterance appears twice, at either side of the composition, just outside of it, in front of Aker's heads. It refers to the content of the oval, not to Aker.

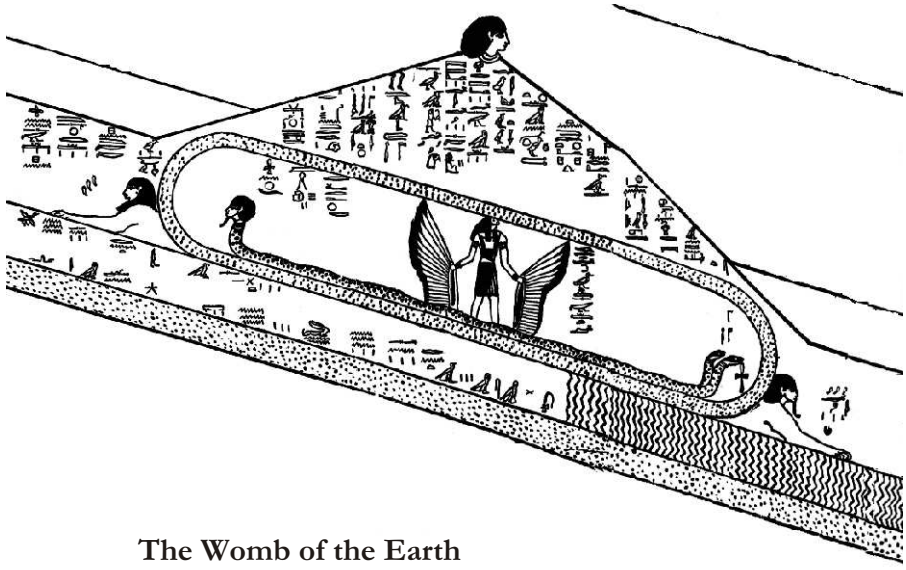
Jwf.

Hour Five

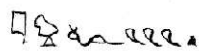


Carrier of Prayers





The Womb of the Earth



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Aker

The womb of Isis, the womb of earth, is enclosed by Aker, who is here shown as a long oval band filled with dots (representing sand-grains) resting on two sphinx-like figures. Aker is an old earth god, a more mysterious counterpart of Geb. Originally he was represented simply by the long horizontal lozenge that is the ideogram for earth, with a head on one end, like the image of earth that appears on the famous Narmer palette. As early as the time of the Pyramid texts, the head was being depicted on both sides of the oval, looking into the distance to suggest the earth's limitless extension east and west:

By the New Kingdom, Aker was made sphinxlike by the addition of a lion's forequarters below the faces. The contributing causes are numerous and not very enlightening: perhaps the most important was the association of lions with the desert wastes to the far east and west of Egypt.

Aker, as an earth god, of course includes within himself the entire underworld: thus he is in his place here at the midnight midpoint of Ra's underground journey. The center is only recognizable with reference to the whole circumference, thus Aker's whole oval must be shown.

On either side of the oval, at each of the Aker heads, is the text:

Breathing and alive through hearing the voice of Ra: his task is to guard Ra's corpse till the process be complete.

Within the stippled band that forms the oval this text is given four times:

Aker, who guards the mysterious corpse in Sokar's land.

This line appears immediately over Aker's oval, and directs our attention to the process taking place within Aker:

This is how it looks, the the process taking place in the blackest pit of dark.

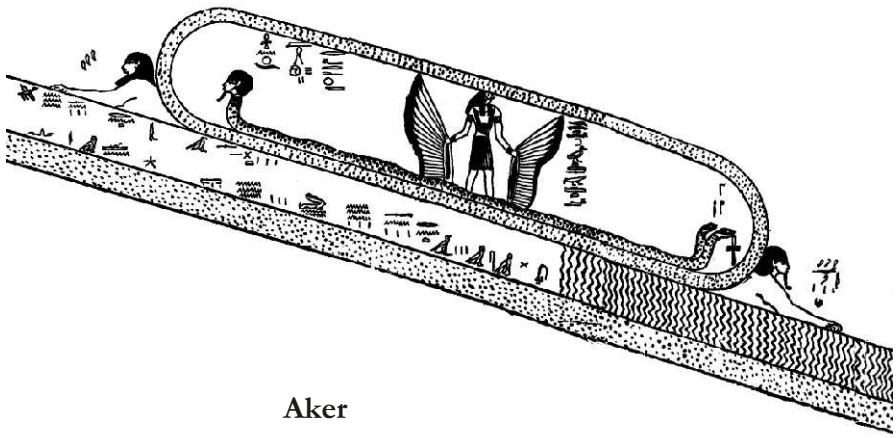
Srq.f m h3rw ntr a2a. Jrjt.f pw: sawt ss2m(w).f.[1]

Akr saa jwf s2ta ta skry.

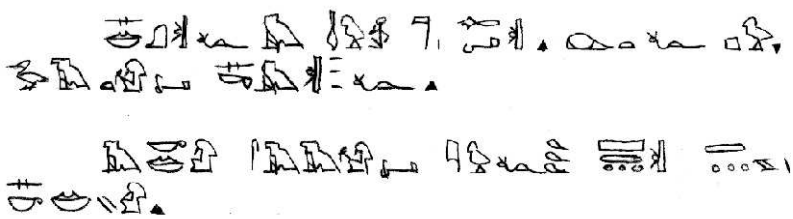
Wnn ss2m pn m sh3r pn m kkw smaw.

[1] The *(w)* here is added because we could read the word as either *ss2m* ("process") or *ss2mw* ("form").

Hour Five



Aker



Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Sokar

Sokar was already a prominent funereal deity in the *Pyramid Texts*; he is usually represented as a falcon perched on a sand gravemound.

Already in the Old Kingdom, Sokar was strongly associated with Ptah. Ptah, god of all crafts, had some intrinsic funereal associations: it was his adze that ritually "opened the mouth" of the embalmed body in the funeral ritual to ensure its ability to eat, breathe and speak in the underworld. Also, Ptah was responsible for the construction of tombs and the manufacture of burial goods. The Egyptians felt Ptah's role in burial rites was so important that they always represented him as a mummy.

The fusion with mummified Ptah facilitated Sokar's amalgamation with the mummy Osiris. This won general acceptance in the New Kingdom, from which time the syncretic deity Ptah-Sokar-Osiris remained a standard member of the pantheon, till the end of Egyptian history. So much for Sokar.

The New Kingdom saw the resolution of a long-standing tension in Egyptian religion, that between the solar deity Ra and the vegetation deity Osiris. This conflict between Ra and Osiris played out on a number of levels. Blinding, unapproachable Ra was a god of the nobility and priesthood while the suffering, all-too-human Osiris was a deity dear to the people. This in turn echoed an ouranian-chthonic conflict that goes back to the original unification of Egypt: the conquest of agricultural northern Egypt by the hunting-herding south. Agricultural Osiris remained the chief deity of the subject people, while Ra, sky-god of the nomads, became the god of the ruling class.

One might even call the Ra-Osiris tension in Egyptian religion a conflict between the rational and the emotional, between "Apollonian and Dionysian" viewpoints (and this is the only case I know of where an export of Nietzsche's famous formulation is really appropriate).

Akhenaten had attempted a total solarization of the pantheon. He tried to expunge Osiris and make the sun god alone supreme. This poem rose to prominence in response to Akhenaten's attempt, it became the anthem of the Osirian counter-revolution. For in the *Amduat*, Osiris and Ra are one, or rather, Osiris has *absorbed* Ra. From this time on, all hell breaks loose in Egyptian art. The Dantean night-world of the unconscious erupts into expression as never before.

The physical coincidence of the falcon head, which characterizes both Horus and Sokar here, provides a visual emblem of the synthesis. At once Ra and Osiris, solar falcon and lord of the dead, Sokar becomes a concise formulation of the idea that death is part of the process of life, and life is part of the process of death: that the two aspects are inseparable and indispensible.

Here Sokar-headed Ra-Horus, the resurrected Osiris, stands amid the coils of the serpent of Time. He is resurrected from the body of the snake which had, in the previous hour, swallowed him entire. He holds the wings of Time: he has arrested his own aging and siezed control of the all too mobile moment. With a fine irony he bears the superscription:

Dead Sokar whose Throne is a Gravemound.

Jwf, Skr h2r s2a2j.f

Hour Five

Sokar

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Ourobouros

My identification of the serpent with Time and Kepri should be supported in detail. The texts in this section are largely written in the deliberately obscure "enigmatic script," and the names of the gods are mostly left out. Due to this reticence, the explication of the winged serpent has remained the unsolved and principal mystery of the book *Amduat*.

Now the serpent itself has three snake heads (Budge's version has only two) at one end of his body, and a god's head at the other. I believe this is a conflation of two contiguous images from the lower register of the previous hour.

In Hour Four the three-headed snake "Alterer" represented Time, which is divisible into many, yet still one. The three-headed side of the serpent we have here alludes to this. The use of serpents to represent time is standard for this period and this book.

The figure of Kepri immediately followed "Alterer," in Hour Four, in the pose of a conqueror, with a winged solar disk over his head. Kepri was thus identified with the rising sun, which brings the full-color world into view from the grayscale world of night. This point was emphasised in the image from Hour Four by labeling the sun-disk *sab shewet*, "of many-colored plumes."

The wings of the serpent here in Hour Five are also *sab shewet,* and we should take the god's head at the left extremity of the snake as part of this identification with Kepri.

The conflation of Kepri with the serpent of Time is logical. The name "Kepri" is from the verb *keper*, "to come into being," which is what Time does at every instant. Kepri's image here, integrated with the underworld Time-serpent, indicates that Time is the creator as much as it is the destroyer. The famous image of the *ourobouros*, which comes into alchemy from Egyptian funerary art, is a more concise representation of the image we have here.

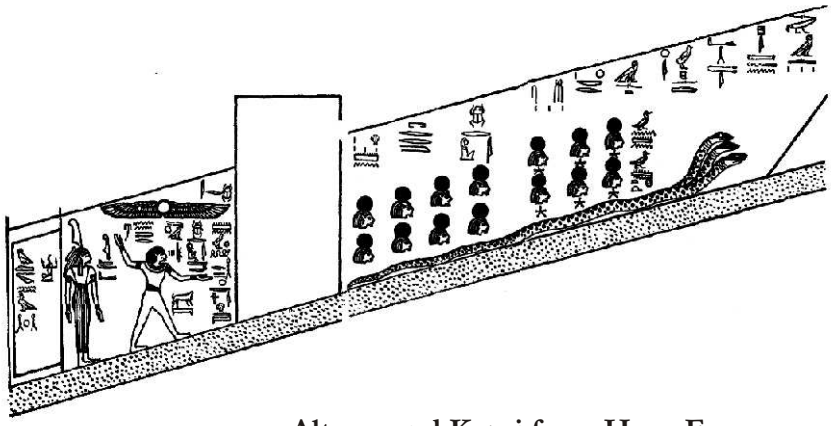
The same idea is broached in the middle register, directly above, where we see Kepri emerging upside-down from a tomb as if from an egg, reaching out and taking the sun-barque's tow-rope to draw Ra safely over the pinnacle of his difficulties. Death (the tomb) and Becoming (Kepri) are part of the same process, and this is what draws Ra through his transformation.

> Every day Ra is reborn,
> and Ra is every newborn day.
> The breath of Ra restored
> is the life-breath of Time itself.
> The Time-serpent's task is to watch over
> this process of coming to be—
> the great god Kepri, who is Time,
> who opens wide his many-colored wings,
> and recreates for us the visible world of day.

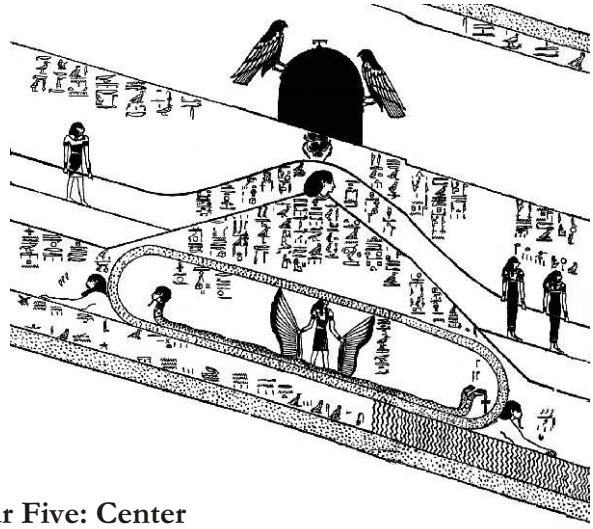
A2nh3.f m t2aw tpy-r.f ra2 nb. Jrjt.f pw, sat ss2m(w).f[1] *— nt2r a2a wpj d2nh2wy, sab s2w(t).*

[1] Literally: "He (the snake) lives by the breath from his (Ra's) mouth every day. His task is to watch over his (Ra's) process (or form)."

Hour Five



Alterer and Kepri from Hour Four



Hour Five: Center

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

11th Century BCE Ouroboros

This scene is taken from the Twenty-first dynasty (11th century B.C.E.) mythological papyrys of *Her Weben*. The central figure rests on two lions representing the horizon (as defined by Aker's lions). Between the lions is a cow's head representing Hathor, mistress of the mountains east and west behind which the sun sets and from which it rises. In the center we have the newborn sun with the crook and flail of royalty, depicted as a child, with a juvenile's side-lock and sucking his finger (the equivalent for us of representing a baby with a frilly bonnet and sucking its thumb.) At top we see the two arms of the the sky goddess who recieves the rising sun.

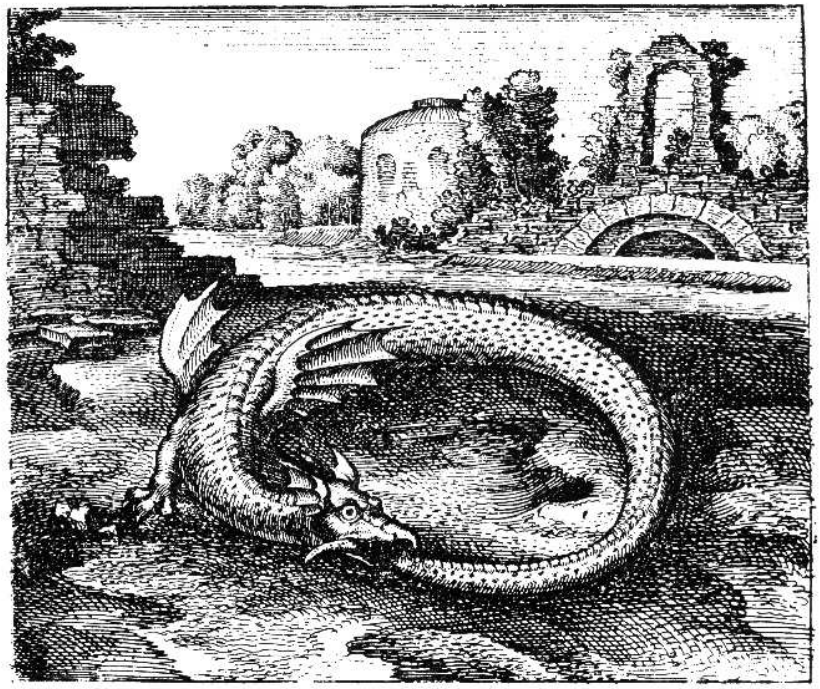
Finally, and most importantly for us, we note the serpent of time and becoming. It defines the womb of darkness and death from which the sun is reborn. As a form of Kepri, it both swallows and disgorges, creates and destroys, itself.

Hour Five

Fourth Century CE Ouroborus

This comes from a manuscript of the 4th century CE Greek Zosimus. The Greek inscription reads "All is one." This is another, and far briefer, statement of the same idea we find in the *Amduat*: dissolution is part of the process of new creation. The original meaning of the time-serpent is not lost: the goal of alchemy is to hasten the natural maturation of elements within the earth, to "ripen" them into gold. This is still very much Kepri as the time-serpent, though he bears a different name: *ouroboros*, which means, literally, "eats its own end."

The development of Egyptian symbolism and ideas in alchemy is a subject that has not begun to be adequately studied: continuities as striking as this one could be greatly multiplied.



17th Century Ouroboros

From German Alchemist Michael Maier's 1687 *Scrutinium Cymicum*, a poshumously published abridgement of his well-known *Atlanta Fugiens*.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Scorcher

A serpent with an *ank* at its mouth, facing right, on the ground between Aker and the four seated gods.

He lives on the fiery breath he himself exhales. His task is to guard the matrix of resurrection, this one who has never moved from his post here.

Wam: a2nh3.f m hh tp-r.f. Jrjt.f pw, sat nwt, jwty jw.n.f r st nb n Dwat.

Amun

The first (moving right to left) seated figure holds the tall plumes which would top the crown of Amun, and the second holds a ram's head which is also Amun's emblem. Amun himself, (whose name means "Hidden,") was a god of enormous but rather indistinct creative powers. These early on led to his association with Ra ("Amun-Ra"). Extremely vague, Amun can be described with confidence only as primordial and supreme — he is, as it were, the *Ayn Sof* of the Egyptian pantheon.

The two remaining deities hold the crowns of lower and upper Egypt: an assertion of Amun's sovereignty.

These are a fourfold representation of Amun, the god whose reality underlies Sokar,
Amun who is the ontological ground of Ra in all his transformations.

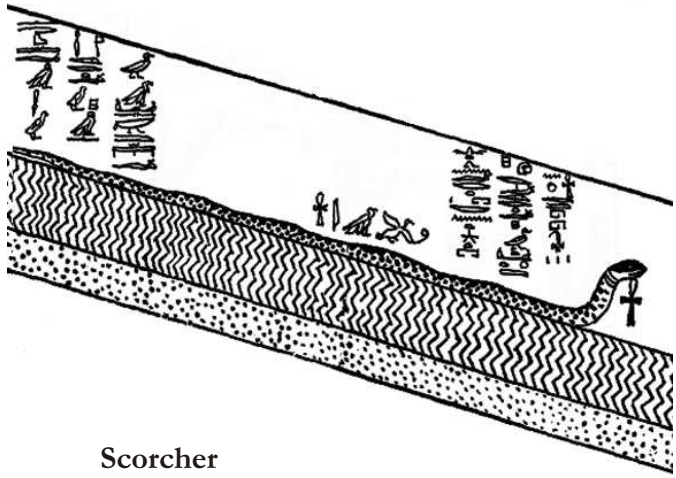
This is Amun, out of whom Ra emerges into physical existence.
These four represent Amun, whom no eye has ever seen.

Nt2rw h4ryw{t} ss2mw s2ta n Skr h2ry s2a2j.f.

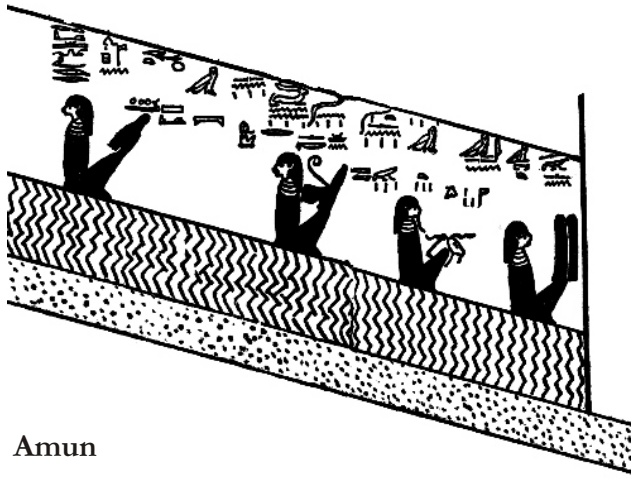
Ss2m(w).sn m prjt jm.sn, m d2t.sn d2s.sn:
wnn.sn m-h3t nt2r pn a2a n ma(w).n jrt.[1]

[1] Literally: "Gods possessing the secret form of Sokar On His Gravemound. Their appearance at the emergence from them, from their body, from theirselves. They are the entourage of that great god whom eye has not seen."

Hour Five



Scorcher



Amun

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Lake of Fire

Directly under the oval womb of regeneration (*Newet*) enclosed by Aker are the Waters (*newet,* a pun) of the Grieving Damned. This Lake of Fire is just above the sand at the bottom of the lowest register. It is a long oblong filled with wavy lines (actually half-filled to permit the inclusion of text). The lines represent water and are painted a bright red. This lake of fire is the punitive counterpart of the Drowning-Pool of Regeneration mentioned in the top register. A mockingly water-like lake of flames, its action is to prevent the dissolution and renewal of the personality. It is the same idea of hell we find in the Western monotheisms, where the damned are forever preserved, literally "dried and smoked," with the unemendable flaws which doomed them.

Fiery waters of the sorrowing damned:
as for the gods who rule this under-ocean, no boat sails by them:
no underworldling could control these waves of the grave-deep abyss.
For the damned, sunk within, they're a sea of flame.

Nwt jakbyw, nt2rw jmyw Jmh2t:
n a2pj.n wja h2r.sn,
n sh3m dwatyw m mw.sn wnn m h4rt-nt2r pn.
Wnn mw.sn r ntyw jm.s m sd2t.

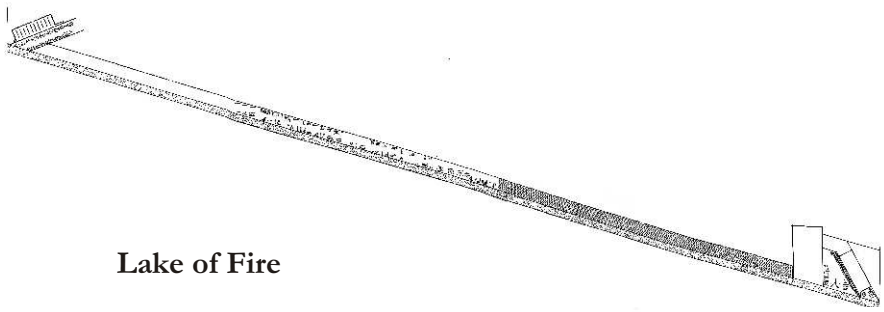
Serpent at Hellgate

The exit is guarded by an upright serpent. Before him is a star, perhaps the morning star, or it may simply be the ideogram for Hell, in which case we would take it with the door to read "Hellgate."

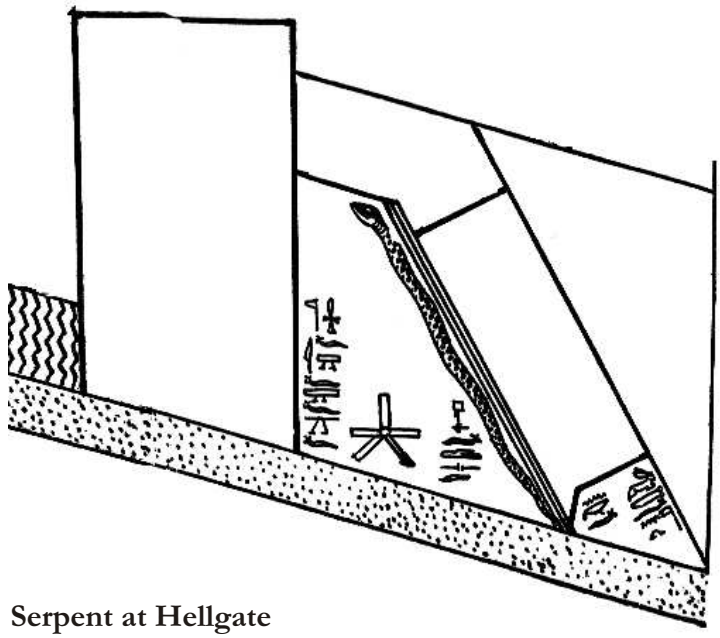
A Hell-dwelling god: he comes, goes, travels and opens the door that cuts like a flint-knife.

Nt2r a3nh3: jw.f s2m.f jj.f sbj.f wba.f ds.

Hour Five

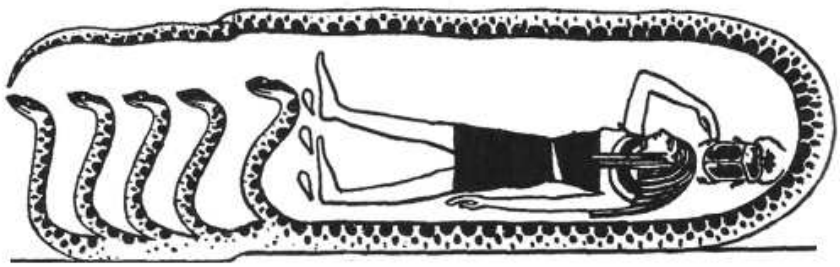


Lake of Fire



Serpent at Hellgate

Hour Six:



The Embryo Kepri

Hour Six

Note:

Large and critical portions the text for this hour are obviously corrupt. The damage extends beyond them, as other parts of the writing, though technically intelligible, are rendered either meaningless or inane because we have no idea who speaks, who is addressed, or what is being spoken about. Since the philological fine detail offers nothing here for the non-specialist, I forego the presentation of hieroglyphs and translation for this hour.

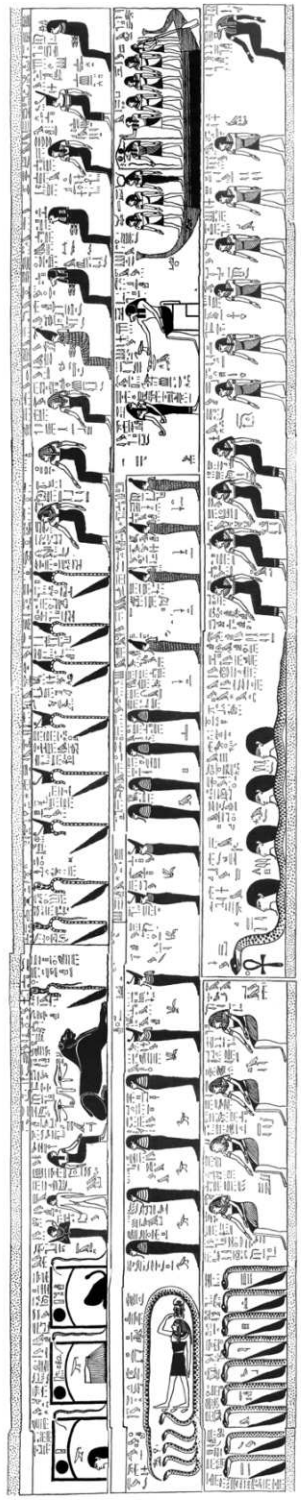
From the illustrations and the general drift of the damaged poem, it appears that in this hour Ra passes among the deceased kings of Egypt who revive to perform the rites of sacrifice.

The locus of the action seems to be the very depths of the underworld waters, the ocean-floor of Nun.

Here is Osiris' tomb, or rather the several tombs where the parts of his body, dismembered by Seth, were hidden. Here Kepri, the embryonic form of Ra-Osiris, assembles his body and takes on life. Hour Five was the grave wherein Osiris was revived. This hour would seem to be the watery womb wherein his first steps to rebirth as a new being take place.

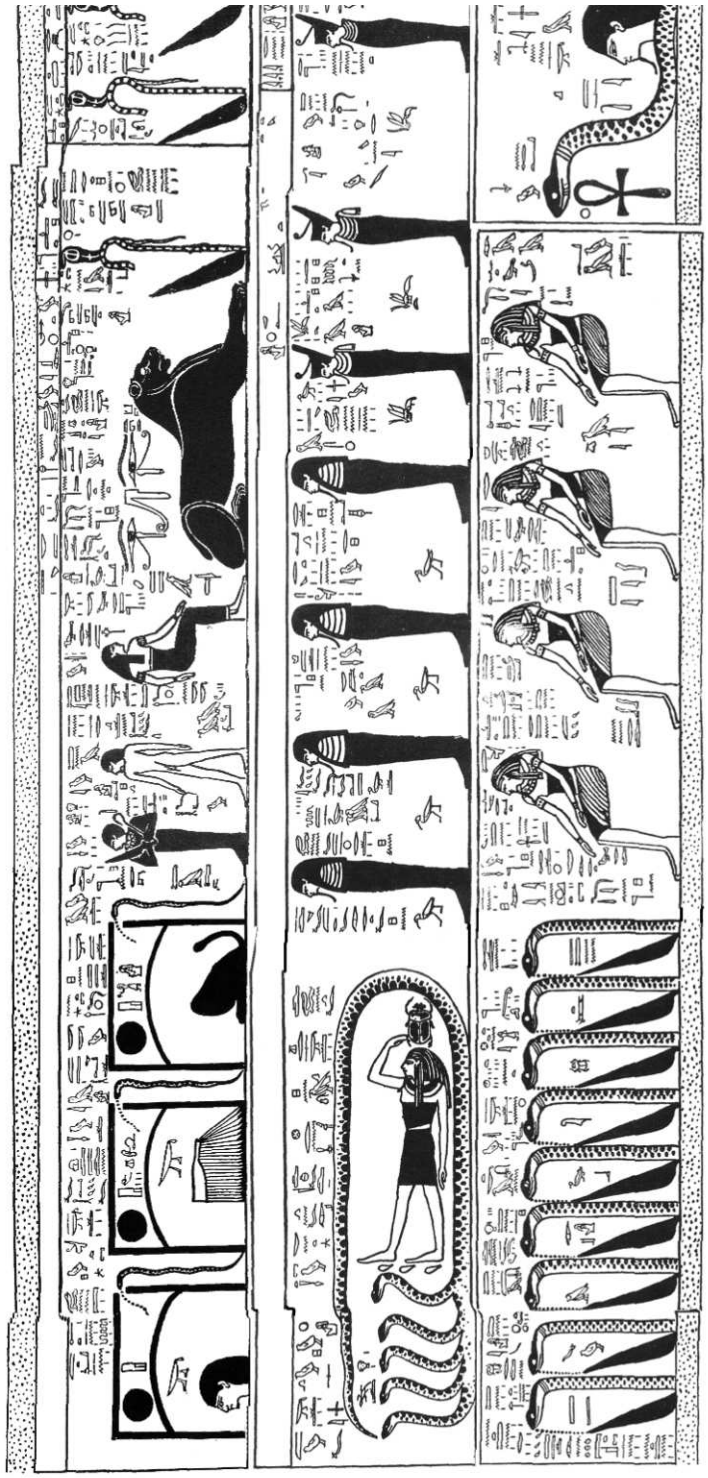
As we have seen, the relation of the illustration to the text is indirect, at times downright tenuous, even when we have a readable text. For the present hour we have no reason to believe the artist had a better text than that which he copied down. The texts which accompany the illustrations, like those of the poem, are so frequently faulty as to be nearly useless. Consequently only the broadest outline of the meaning can be suggested.

It is possible that the mutilation of the text was deliberate. In the fourth hour the silence of Sokar's realm was indicated by the complete abscence of a poem for the hour. It may be that here inchoate state of newborn Ra, still reassembling himself from the hacked fragments of Osiris, has been mirrored in a deliberately fragmented text.

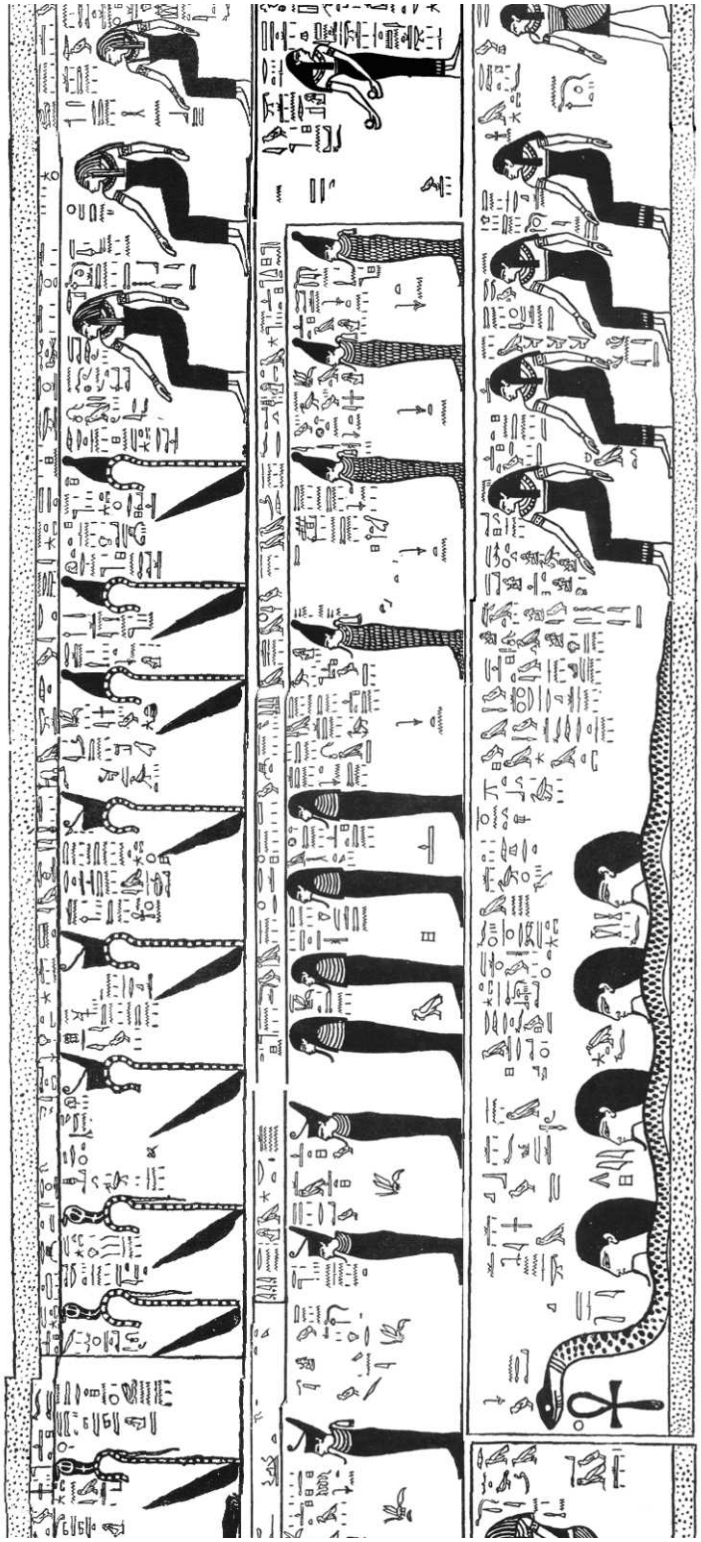


Complete Image of the Hour

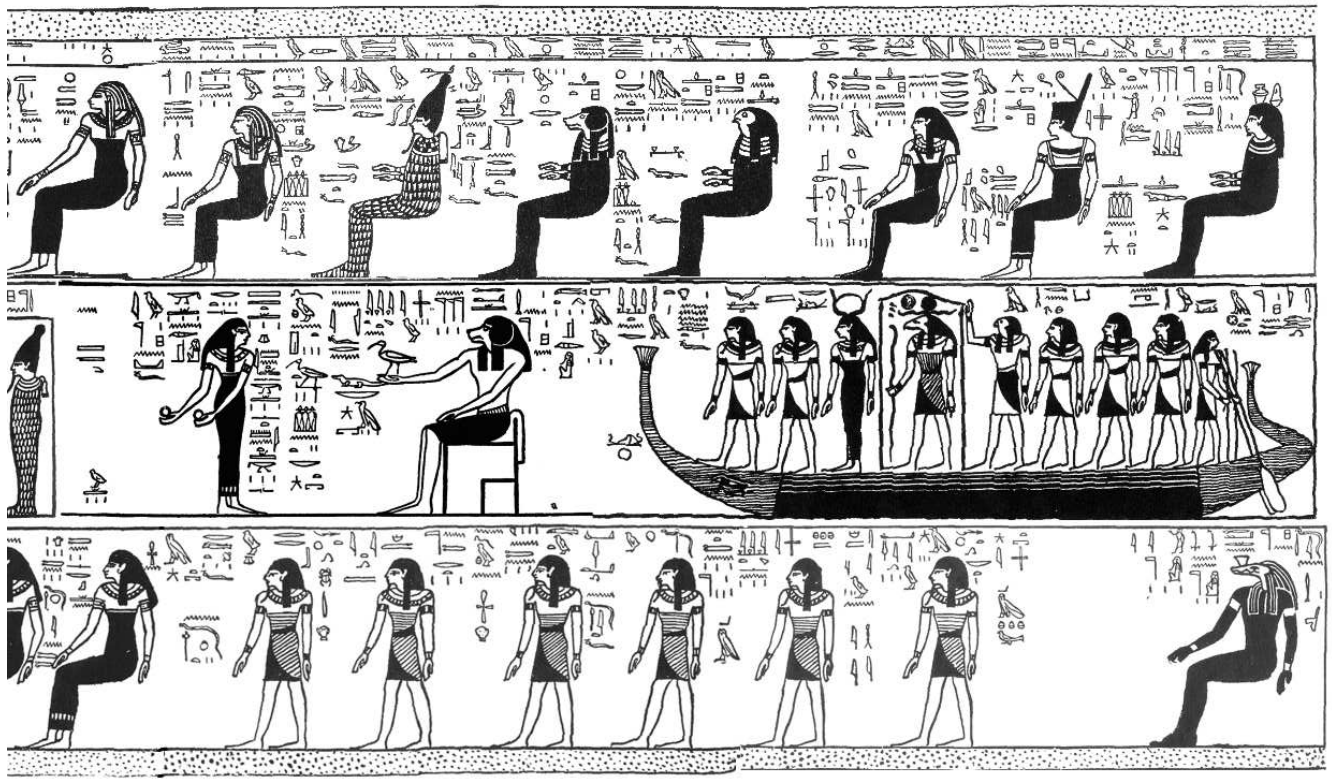
Hour Six



Complete Image: left



Complete Image: center



Complete Image: right

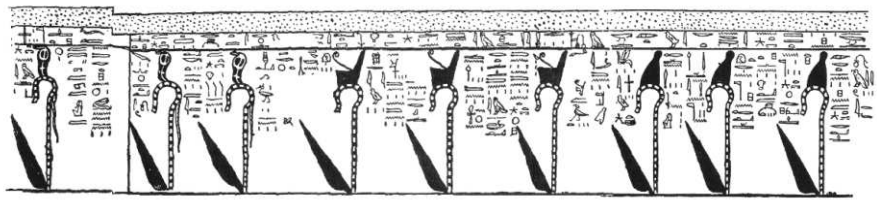
Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Nine Seated Figures

First (going left to right) we have three female deities without special attributes. There follow three mummified deities with hands extended to show their resurrection has begun: these are an Osiris wearing the crown of Southern Egypt, an ape-headed Thoth, and a falcon-headed Horus.

Finally we have a fully non-mummified Osiris and an Isis with the crown of Northern Egypt, followed by another mummified figure who has baked goods on his head — the glyph for offerings.

Though something was surely meant by the chairless seated posture of the figures, neither this nor anything else about the meaning of the group may be affirmed with confidence.



Nine Staves

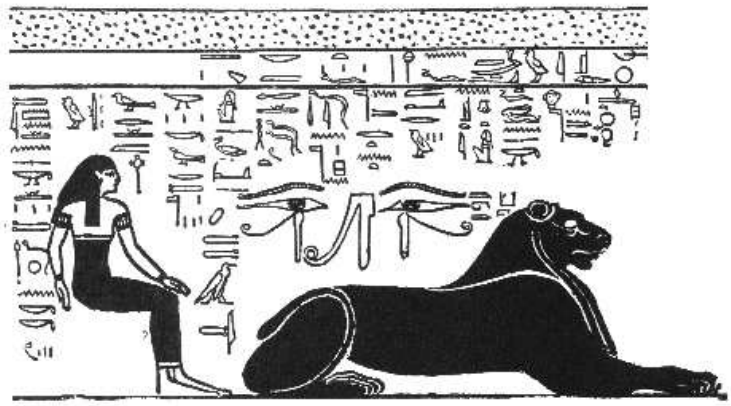
Next come nine crowned staves with knife blades projecting from their bases. These are the tall shepherd's crook, the *heqat*. This was the Egyptain sceptre, held by the pharaohs along with a flail in token of their power to both guide and punish.

The *heqat* may also be an abbreviation for the word *Heqa,* "ruler." By this reading, we have here nine (*i.e.* all) of the former rulers of Egypt, the entire muster of deceased kings. The knives indicate the kings' power to defend themselves.

The first three staves are crowned by a uraeus, indispensible ornament of the Egyptian crown; then there are three staves with the crown of Lower Egypt, and the final three staves carry the crown of Upper Egypt.

The king, after death"becomes an Osiris," *i.e.*, is assimilated to the being of the dying and reviving god. This image shows Hell's foremost habitants are already feeling the effect of Osiris awakening in Hour Five and assembling to greet Ra.

Hour Six

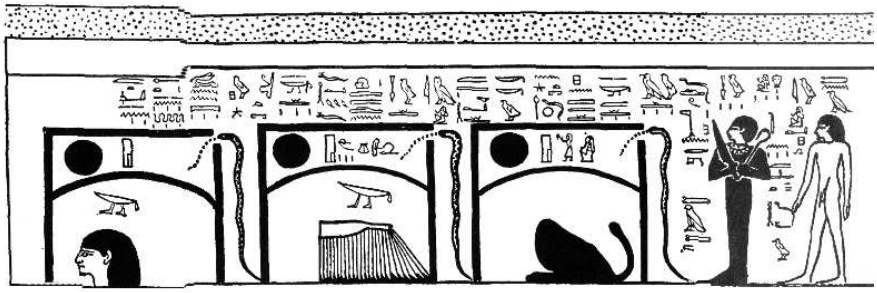


Sunrise

For this vignette, exceptionally, we will read the figures from right to left: Hieroglyphic figures always face the beginning of the line. The eye of Ra (its doubling is not necessarily significant) is the sun, and appears above a Lion which, here as often, represents the horizon of the distant desert from which new sun will rise. (See the 11th century B.C.E. ouroboros illustration in the previous hour).

The goddess, identified as Isis in the superscription, is here as in the preceding hour mother of the new Horus, Ra-Osiris, the rising sun.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell



The Embryo Assembles

At the far left of the whole top register is Isis again (not shown in Budge's version), looking out over the activity in three boxlike shapes. These are the tombs of the various sections of Osiris' dismembered body.

The "boxes" themselves are the glyph for "a building:"a schematic overview showing walls with an entrance. The curved line that divides the boxes into compartments actually forms the glyph for "funeral mound." The boxes are accordingly spell out the phrase "three tomb structures."

At the entrances of the tombs are snake-guardians. They are not standing on their tail-ends, but seen in overview.

The contents of the tombs are also very hieroglyphic: knives which appear just below the line of the grave-mound within each box (Budge's version shows only two of them) and signify the word *seshemew,* "image." It is followed in the various boxes by a head, wings and a body.

These are the head, wings and body of the beetle-god Kepri, the newborn form of Ra-Osiris. We are shown a human head, bird wings, and a lion's abdomen and hindquarters because these are the conventional glyphs for the intended body parts.The three pieces do not go together to make a winged sphinx!

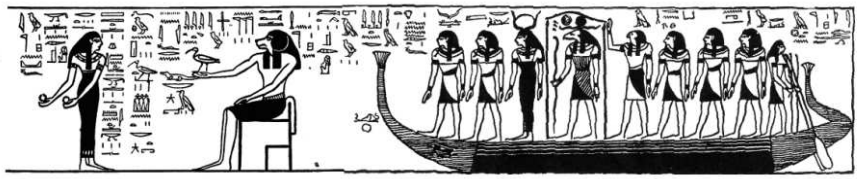
There is a disk in each box, which is the glyph for Ra, placed uppermost in the composition out of respect. Logically, however, it is the last part of the phrase each box forms. We can read the three complex images within the tomb structures as:

Image of the head of Kepri, the newborn Ra -Osiris; Image of the wings of Kepri, the newborn Ra-Osiris; Image of the body of Kepri, the newborn Ra-Osiris.

To the right of the tombs is a mummified figure with a crook and a knife: this is the re-awakened Osiris observing his own rebirth in the new being whose body parts are coming together.

At the far left is the naked male representing the reborn sun, Kepri. He looks to Isis who in turn looks out over the whole process and sees him, the outcome, the new birth.

Hour Six



Thoth and Sun Barque

Baboon headed Thoth sits on a visible throne, holding out the Ibis which is his emblem. Before him stands a figure labeled "She who hides the shapes." She attempts to conceal two disks, the pupils of the new sun's eyes .

Thoth, as god of mathematics and of time's measurement, is here requiring that the underworld (personified as a goddess) yeild Ra-Osiris to his rebirth. She coyly attempts to conceal the fact she holds him.

But the irresistible forces of time and change are now working towards growth rather than decay, and this new situation is reflected in the sun barque which appears behind Thoth entirely restored, it's crew complete.

The Kings Stand Forth

The figures here are four royal mummies without crown, each one named "Transfigured Soul," four mummies with the crown of Lower Egypt, each named "King of Lower Egypt," four royal mummies without crown bearing each the name "Blessed Dead," and four mummies wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, each one bearing the name "King of Upper Egypt." This is a more explicit version of the nine staves image immediately above in the upper register: a muster of the dead kings of Egypt, all of whom participate in the resurrection of Osiris. The superscription reads:

Transfigured Souls, Monarchs of Lower Egypt, Blessed Dead, Kings of Upper Egypt: they look like this when they stand at the entrance to their burial caves. They hear the voice of Ra each day.

Isle of Fire: The Book of What's in Hell

Ouroboros

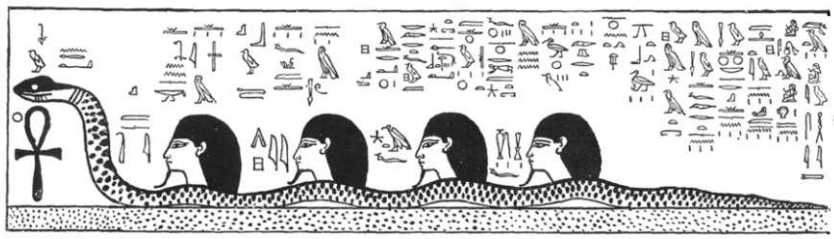
The illustration shows the *ourobouros*, an image well familiar to us after its key roles in the previous two hours. In essence this many-headed serpent represents Time. Time, the many-headed (*i.e.,* infinitely divisible), devours itself. Within the serpent of Time (which here bears the label "Many Faces") we see Kepri,the gestating sun. He is labeled "Body," and three bits of flesh (they look like inverted raindrops) that form the glyph for "body" appear at his feet. He is supine, since he is not yet fully awake; though alive, he is still encompassed by the womb of time. He reaches up to touch the glyph for "Kepri" on his head, in token of dawning self-awareness.

Sixteen Gods

At far left we have four seated gods then a serpent with human heads on its back which we will consider below. Next come four seated goddesses, then six standing human forms. The meaning of these figures, like their posture, remains unclear.

Finally we have two crocodile-headed gods (Budge's version shows one) which help situate the scene in the depths of the Ur-ocean Nun. Nun's water are the amniotic fluid in which the sun-embryo assembles itself.

Hour Six



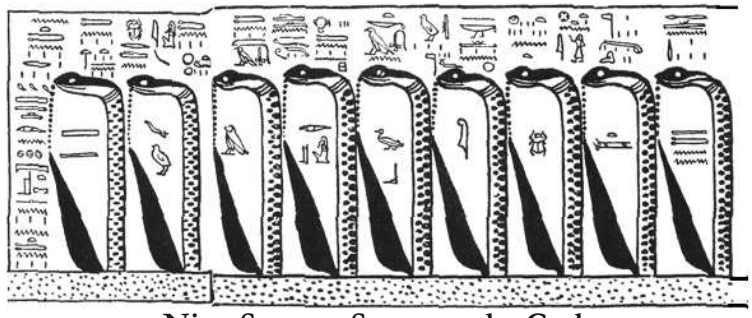
Sons of Horus

This is Time. As the incubator and cherisher of newborn Kepri's life (whence the *ank* below his face), he is the guardian of Kepri's vital organs. As such he incorporates the function of the Sons of Horus.

The four sons of Horus are Imsety, Hapy, Duamutef and Qebehsuef: their names are printed above each of the human heads shown sticking out of (*i.e.*, inside of) the time-snake. The four names are not really intelligible to etymology, but these beings seem to have been originally spirits of the cardinal points which assisted the dead king's ascent to heavens (they are so described in the Pyramid Texts.) Equally ancient is their description as "sons" or "souls" of Horus — poetic terms which actually mean *aspects* of Horus, in his role of Osiris' protector.

The Sons of Horus are best known from their role as guardian spirits of the canopic jars which hold the mummified liver, lungs, stomach and intestines — the organs of thought — of the dead king. They are sculpted on the jar lids as human, baboon, jackal and hawk heads. Though much has been written about the significance of these figures and the complex of correspondences that they bear, the Egyptians themselves were never very precise about what they meant beyond the obvious general funereal and protective sense.

So then, we have here a third version of the incubation of Kepri seen in the two above registers. This image takes up and develops the idea of dawning self-awareness broached in the middle-register: Kepri within the Time serpent is indicated by the vessels that hold his organs of thought.



Nine Serpent Staves and a God

Little can be said about these figures. They would appear to be a echo of the nine royal staves with knives in the top register. (The god, without attributes, standing at far left, does not apppear in Budge's version). The serpents are spitting streams of venomous fire.

About the Author

I was born in 1958 in Paterson N.J., home to William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg. I will pass over the follies of my youth, and only note that I went on to take a BA from Columbia, and a PhD in Classics from Brown, which rendered me virtually unemployable, and for some time not very good company. After almost a decade of waiting tables, digging ditches, selling idols, writing for a small newspaper, &c. &c. in Israel, Ireland and New England, the shifting demographic finally brought demand for my skills, and I am now employed as a High School Latin teacher in New Jersey.

It is unlikely that I will move to college teaching in the foreseeable future, since there are presently several hundred applicants for every job in Classics. Further, High School teaching is, compared to the other jobs a liberal arts degree fits one for, an extremely good gig, and I would have to be quite a fool to trade this for an adjunct position in some desolate place at a third my present salary. Nonetheless, I cherish a faint hope that someday society may find a better use for my talents than explaining the rudiments of person, number and tense, or deciding who really needs to go to the bathroom.

I am the author of a number of books. As often (rarely) as my writing is noticed by the academic reviewer, it is vilified, which puts to rest any doubts I may have had about the lasting value of my work.

Tiring at last of the ancient Mediterranean, I have turned my attention to China, and am presently memorizing thousands of cryptic little pictures so as to read the traditional Chinese classics. For less cerebral excitement, I ride a Honda Rebel into the blissful mythic distance. My current project is running Invisible Books. I am always glad to hear from interesting people, so don't hesitate to drop me a line, which may be done through the Invisible Books website.